

ELIZABETHAN
DRAMA
JANET SPENS

William
Walsham

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BY

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METHUEN & CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

First Published in 1922

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ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

CHAPTER I

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE chief difficulty which encumbers the path of the student of Elizabethan drama is that he cannot understand the significance of any one play until he has read several others of the class to which it belongs and of approximately the same date ; while, on the other hand, this same classification and ascription of authorship is by no means an easy matter, or one in which absolute certainty is likely to be reached.

Luckily the clue to which the beginner generally trusts is on the whole the best. Elizabethan drama centres in Shakespeare, not merely for the " general reader," but also for the professional student. Shakespeare seems to have tried nearly every form or plan suggested by his predecessors and given it in many cases its supreme expression. Moreover, to an extent which was at one time greatly under-estimated, his successors recognized his pre-eminence and started from his achievement.

The student then should start by being familiar with the whole of the Shakespeare canon, i.e. all the plays given in the *Globe* edition. Notes and introductions are at this stage unimportant : the student should know the plots, the individual scenes, the characters so as to be able to recognize them afterwards. Further, the first

collected edition published in 1623 divided the plays into Comedies, Chronicle Histories and Tragedies, and this classification will be found useful. It is generally supposed that the order of the plays in the Folio has no sort of relation to their date of composition. For this a beginner should consult Dowden's *Shakespeare Primer*, or, if it is accessible, Ward's "*English Dramatic Literature*." The latter gives a section to each play explaining what evidence of any kind we have for date. Sir Sidney Lee's "*Life of Shakespeare*" is the standard authority on that subject. For the other dramatists any Biographical Dictionary should be consulted, and the Introductions to the *Mermaid Series* of Elizabethan dramatists are generally good.

But a very little study of these secondary authorities will suggest the question, "How do they ultimately get their information?" The answer is, Chiefly from three sources: (1) The Stationers' Register; (2) Extant contemporary copies of the plays; (3) Henslowe's Diary.

(1) The Stationers' Register is the record kept by the guild of stationers (which included printers) of all books entered for publication. During the reign of Mary Tudor the Government was annoyed by the publication of heretical books. To deal with individual printers scattered over the country was a difficult matter, so the Government granted a charter to the Stationers' Company, gave it a monopoly of printing and ordered it to keep a record of the books it had accepted for printing. If then a book objectionable to the Government of the day was printed after being entered in due form the Government held the Company responsible. Occasionally a book or more often a pamphlet was printed without being entered, but this must have been difficult. The Government had limited the number of printing-presses, and these licensed presses were, of course, in the possession of members of the Company. For one of

these to print anything without entering it would have been to risk loss of position ; while, on the other hand, unlicensed printing was a dangerous business. On the whole, therefore, most printed books were entered on the Register.

(2) Where the Register fails, extant copies of the book sometimes fill the gap in our knowledge. How much can be learned from the book itself, even if the date it gives is inaccurate, has only lately been discovered by Professor Pollard and Mr. W. W. Greg. To the bibliographical discoveries I shall return—for the moment the student is advised that Mr. Greg's " Lists of Plays and of Masques " gives in a convenient form all that can be learned from the title-pages of extant plays by expert inspection. Except perhaps for anyone engaged on a monograph, his book may be used to save personal inspection of the Elizabethan copies of the plays.

(3) Henslowe's Diary is perhaps the most important discovery ever made by a Shakespeare critic. It was found by Malone at Dulwich College and is the Day-book of a certain Philip Henslowe, money-lender and theatre-owner in Shakespeare's time. The founder of Dulwich College, Alleyn, a great Elizabethan actor, married the step-daughter of Henslowe, and the two men conducted some business together.

Henslowe's first interesting entries are loans of money to impecunious dramatists or companies. Sometimes the loans to acting companies are repaid by assigning to Henslowe the takings at certain plays in certain parts of the house. Sometimes the loan is to permit of the buying by the company of a play. Later on, when Henslowe owned a theatre, he kept a whole staff of underpaid dramatists working for him. Dekker, for example, seems to have got into his power—Henslowe had paid his debts and so released him from the Debtors' Prison—and he is generally writing plays or patching old ones at less than the usual fee.

We have also in the Diary the accounts of what it cost to rebuild the theatre taken by Henslowe and Alleyn, and some record of what properties were necessary for acting companies.

Henslowe never seems to have had Shakespeare in his power, but all the same he throws much light on his work. The two sources of information already touched on tell us chiefly when a play was printed. If we had not known it before, Henslowe's Diary would have been ample proof that a successful play was rarely, if ever, printed soon after its production. What copyright there was, was purely that of the printer and publisher. Once a book had been "entered for" a man's "copy under the hands of" the Warden of the Stationers' Company and his fellows the book belonged to that printer. It was an infringement of his right for anyone else to print it, but it was rather in his interests that another company than the original should act it. Because of this apparently no dramatist ever printed his plays before they had been acted. The present writer believes that the version of Shakespeare's "*Troilus and Cressida*" which we possess was intended by the author for print and not for the stage; but the whole history of this play is peculiar. The ordinary dramatist was attached more or less loosely to a particular company, which would have severed its connexion with him had he often allowed his plays to be printed before their fashion in the theatre was past. Shakespeare was quite early—by 1593 certainly—a "*Sharer*" in the company for which he wrote and acted, and publication authorized by him against their interest is inconceivable.

Henslowe, then, often mentions a play long before the Stationers' Register or the title-page of the play gives any idea that it was in existence. Sometimes he attaches the word "ne," supposed to stand for "new," to a play, and this is of great assistance. Elizabethan

theatres were repertoire theatres, and no play had the portentous runs of modern times, but a play was often refurbished and additions in the taste of the time were made to it. The "Spanish Tragedy" is an interesting example of this. It was a great success when it first appeared, and in 1602 Henslowe paid Ben Jonson for additions—apparently to the mad scenes. This refurbishing makes evidence of dates for Shakespeare's plays drawn from contemporary allusions of very little value—such allusions are just what the renovator bent on giving the play a contemporary flavour would undoubtedly add.

It remains to be noted that Henslowe's Diary fell after its discovery into the hands of John Payne Collier, who was a very eminent critic. Collier issued the first edition of it. A little later, however, Collier was charged with forging literary documents, and among the other authentic documents with which he is said to have tampered was Henslowe's Diary. But Mr. W. W. Greg has now brought out a monumental edition of the book from which he believes he has removed practically all Collier's alterations. The whole problem of Collier is, however, curious. The most recent discoveries on the whole go to confirm statements which he made, it was alleged, on the evidence of imaginary contemporary records.

Linked indirectly with the Collier controversy is another source of information not yet thoroughly sifted—the Records of the Revels Office. The Master of the Revels was the royal official charged with the provision and oversight of royal entertainments. Theoretically in Elizabeth's time all acting companies existed chiefly to provide entertainments for the Queen, and out of this seems to have grown the practice, and then the regulation, that all plays must be submitted before being acted to the Master of the Revels. The companies paid a fee for the licence issued to them

by the Master. The Records of the Revels Office are obviously, therefore, important. Under James they became even more interesting, for that King soon after his accession took Shakespeare's company under his own particular protection, and after that time it is likely that Shakespeare's plays were generally first acted at Court.

In Professor Quiller-Couch's book "Shakespeare's Workmanship" is given a short account of the controversy about the earliest publication of any of the Revels accounts. A certain official in the Credits Office called Peter Cunningham was also Treasurer in 1842 of the Shakespeare Society and edited for it "Extracts from the accounts of the Revels at Court in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I." These extracts among other matters of interest include entries dating the first performances of "Othello" and of "The Tempest." But later on the editor involved himself in the shadow on Collier's reputation, and critics believed that he had tampered with the accounts and forged most of the interesting entries. The wheel, however, turned again. In 1911 Mr. Ernest Law published "Some Supposed Shakespeare Forgeries," which he followed up with another pamphlet, and proved fairly conclusively that Cunningham, whatever other sins he committed, had not tampered with the Revels account books from which his extracts were taken, and which, therefore, remain as a valuable source of information. In December, 1920, Mrs. Stopes, well known for her Shakespeare work, revived in a letter to "The Times Literary Supplement" the doubts about these Revels accounts, only to elicit from Mr. Law a series of letters in which he shows that the points noticed by Mrs. Stopes confirm rather than weaken the case for the authority of the accounts.

Anyone who wishes to do first-hand work should also get access to the records of the Corporation of London.¹

¹ Consult first the extracts published by the Malone Society, and the *Index* compiled by Overall.

Theatres within the City bounds were under the authority of the Corporation. The tone of that body throughout this period was generally Puritan, and the Puritan party objected strongly to dramatic performances. Considerable correspondence, therefore, passed between the City authorities, who tried to close the theatres on every possible pretext, and the Privy Council, many of whose members were patrons of the acting companies.

Besides the records of the corporation's regulations and of their dealings with the Court, some valuable information might be recovered from the records of entertainments permitted and even paid for by the burgesses. Munday, the dramatist, was at one time poet to the City, and his duties included preparing masques or pageants for City festivities. There is some trace of Lydgate's being employed for the same purpose. The records of other towns should also yield information of travelling companies.

But all students are bound to inform themselves of the interesting Bibliographical controversy with which are connected the names of Sir Sidney Lee, Professor A. W. Pollard, and Mr. Greg.

The ultimate authority for the bulk of Shakespeare's dramatic works is the Folio issued in 1623 after his death, under the names of his "fellows" Heminge and Condell, which claims to be a complete edition of his acted plays. Sixteen of the plays had been previously issued singly in Quarto editions—all but one, "Othello," in his lifetime. Of the others, had it not been for the Folio, we should have had no record at all. For no undoubted Shakespeare MS. has come down to us. The MS. of "Sir Thomas More," practically unknown till 1844, may contain some of his writing and is of great interest in many respects, but at best it gives us no idea of how Shakespeare worked at a play for which he was really responsible. The absence of MSS. is partly accounted for by the great fire at the

Globe Theatre. Shakespeare's plays, like those of every other dramatist, belonged to the company which acted them, so that he would neither be likely to take the MSS. with him when he retired to Stratford nor was he in a position to bequeath them in his will.

The Folio has been several times reproduced in more or less satisfactory facsimile, but the standard edition is that edited by Sir Sidney Lee in 1902, to which he prefixed an important bibliographical essay. The editing is a monument of care and skill, and Sir Sidney's explanations of how certain peculiarities in the text came about are marvellous examples of ingenuity well applied. But he attacks the original editors of the Folio, and in so doing takes from us all hope that we have even approximately the words that Shakespeare wrote. His attack is founded partly on the state of the book itself and partly on the preface of Heminge and Condell taken in connexion with it.

Into the defects of the book there is not space here to go. One or two startling peculiarities may be mentioned. The pagination is very frequently wrong. Frequently twenty numbers or so are left out; occasionally numbers are repeated: "*Troilus and Cressida*" has a number only on one page (both sides). These peculiarities the Baconian heretics consider to be due to deliberate purpose to draw attention to a cypher. For this reason it is worth the student's while to follow out to his own satisfaction the explanations given by Sir Sidney Lee of how some of the errors have arisen. The task of explaining has been made easier by a thrifty practice of Elizabethan printers. Press correcting seems to have been done in the printing house by the author or other responsible person, and while the printing was going on. When the corrector found mistakes, the printer corrected them in his type, and the sheets afterwards printed would be correct. But apparently he neither threw away the incorrect

sheets nor attempted in binding to keep the corrected sheets of one page with the other corrected sheets. Hence very few, if any, Elizabethan books are identical in the different copies, and the Folio, which was probably issued in what was then a large edition, has survived in sufficient numbers to enable us to explain some of its peculiarities.

One of the old grounds of complaint against Heminge and Condell has recently been cleared away. The punctuation of the Folio used to be regarded as hopelessly bad, and few modern editors attempted to reproduce it. Mr. Percy Simpson, however, showed in his monograph on the subject that Elizabethan punctuation—and particularly perhaps the punctuation of plays—was on a different system from that to which we are accustomed. Ours is logical and intended to guide the silent reader; theirs was rhythmical (or, as Professor Pollard puts it, dramatic), intended to direct the speaker how to stress the sentence. Mr. Simpson gives a good example taken from "Henry V." Fluellen is compelling the cowardly bully Pistol to eat a leek. Pistol begins a sentence intending to refuse, with insult, but Fluellen is flourishing his cudgel and he stops midway to do as he is told as fast as possible. The Folio prints it without a stop:

"By this Leeke, I will most horribly revenge I eat and eat I swear."

The punctuation then of the Folio is a point in favour of Heminge and Condell and their authorities.

Sir Sidney Lee's argument turns mainly on one passage in the original preface to the Folio. Heminge and Condell there claim that "where (before) you were abus'd with diverse stolne and surreptitious copies . . . even those are new offer'd to your view cur'd and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers as he conceived them." The reference is

undoubtedly to the Quarto versions of certain plays. Sir Sidney Lee says that the editors mean that all the Quarto versions were bad, being "stolne and surreptitious." Further, he proceeds to show that in certain cases, e.g. "The Merchant of Venice," the editors had given to the printer of their own edition the very Quarto which he holds they had condemned as inaccurate. There is no question that Heminge and Condell did give the printers in many cases the Quarto versions as copy. Sometimes they corrected them considerably, sometimes very little, if at all. If, therefore, their words imply that *all* the Quarto versions were bad, it is impossible to defend them. But, as Professor Pollard points out, the words might equally well mean that *some* of the earlier versions were bad, and that where this was the case the editors had corrected them.

He then proceeds to show that in fact there *is* a great difference in the quality of the Quarto versions, and that in no instance does the Folio rely altogether on a bad version. In "Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates" he shows the extreme improbability that Shakespeare and his company, backed as they were for the most part by the Lord Chamberlain of the day, an important member of the Privy Council, should have allowed themselves to be robbed systematically by members of the Stationers' Company, a guild very much in the power of the said Privy Council. He admits that there were a few cases, e.g. the first Quarto of "Hamlet," but these cases all without exception show some irregularity in the Stationers' entry and in other ways, and are the bad copies. Heminge and Condell, he holds, had access to something coming fairly directly from Shakespeare's hand, quite possibly MSS. Where an authorized Quarto version existed they sent it to the printer, corrected from the authentic document in their own possession. Otherwise they sent a MS. which may very possibly have been Shakespeare's own,

and if not was a direct transcript from it. Full study of the peculiarities of Shakespeare's handwriting and of the sort of undoubted errors in the text might settle this question. Unfortunately, apart from a few signatures, we have no unchallenged specimens of his hand. Sir Edward Maunde Thompson and others have made careful comparison of the signatures and those passages in "Sir Thomas More" which have on other grounds been attributed to Shakespeare. Sir Edward believes they are by him, and, if this is so, it should be possible to say whether compositors were more likely to misread his MS. rather than that of a professional scribe so as to produce certain mistakes.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERISTICS OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

ELIZABETHAN drama is unlike any other literary form known to us. The Greek drama was a religious service, attendance at which was a public duty, and this gave it from the first a certain dignity. French drama was a fairly frank imitation of classical drama. Spanish drama came nearest to English, but the exact relationship is uncertain.

Aristotle says that the basis of Greek drama was the choric song. To rest the singers and dancers the poet at some point came forward and recited a tale in verse. Later, another person was detached from the chorus to ask and answer questions of the poet. He was called the "answerer," "hypocrites," which became the name for an actor. Finally another actor was added, but in classical Greek drama no more than three speaking persons, apart from the chorus, were ever on the stage together.

Whatever view we take of the origin of English drama, one thing is certain—that dialogue and a multiplicity of persons appeared at the very start. Songs interspersed through the play appeared possibly because Lyly's comedies were written for performance by the "children of the Chapel Royal," and other dramatists imitated, when they had the chance, a fashion the value of which was at once apparent. But the purposes which the chorus served in Greek drama of the great period had to be attained by English dramatists in other ways. Let us examine this.

The Greek chorus was a homogeneous crowd originally of fifty, but eventually of fifteen persons. They might be men, women, slaves, etc., but there was never a mixture of types. After the prologue the chorus was continuously in the theatre, and supposed to see and hear everything that happened on the stage. Its presence gave rise to some unnatural situations, but on the other hand it obviated the necessity for soliloquies. The relation between the hero or heroine and the chorus varied, but the chorus never acted against the interest of the principal character, and was as a rule favourable to him. They are generally law-abiding persons, so that when a crime is planned they are not told clearly what is about to happen, though they may suspect. The following are the chief functions.

1. Originally the chorus was in the mass the hero of the play and the actors were only particular examples of the general character. This sort of chorus appears among later plays, for example in the "Trojan Women" of Euripides. The play deals with the tragic fates of the Trojan women when their fathers and husbands have been slain at the Fall of Troy. They are to become the slaves and concubines of their conquerors, and are separated and carried off to foreign lands. The principal named characters are Hecuba and Andromache, the mother and the wife of Hector, whose fate is more dreadful than that of the other women, but of the same sort. There are a good many examples of this type of chorus, probably because the identity of interest between chorus and tragic hero lessened the inconvenience of their knowledge of the hero's intentions.

2. The chorus may represent the view of the average person and so provide a background against which the hero stands out.

3. The chorric odes may represent the poet's standpoint or suggest atmosphere.

4. The odes are used to give relief when the strain becomes too great.

Now for the first of these purposes Elizabethan drama provided no adequate substitute. The dramatists accustomed to the typical or class personages of the Moralities were probably aware of the defect and make fairly obvious efforts to meet it. It is, for example, probable that Shakespeare and the author of the "Troublesome Reign of King John" meant the Bastard to represent the English people. The creation of scenes with the populace is generally to meet the second purpose of the chorus, but unnamed first and second citizens and so on were used sometimes to voice the inarticulate multitudes. "The father who has killed his son" and "the son who has killed his father" in "Henry VI" in this way are symbols of the unnatural and terrible situations of Civil War.

5. Elizabethan dramatists have two main ways of giving the poet's comment: (a) the Induction used by Shakespeare's contemporaries, but scarcely at all by himself, and (b) the Fool or other supernumerary character, who is Shakespeare's chief mouthpiece.

The origin of the Induction is not certain. It may have owed a good deal to the Prologue of Senecan and Greek plays, but it appears curiously early in the popular drama. The Induction of the "Taming of a Shrew," on which Shakespeare's acknowledged play, "The Taming of the Shrew," is founded, is a good example of the induction of comedy. The disreputable but hen-pecked tinker Christopher Sly is found sleeping a drunken sleep outside the ale-house by a certain lord and his servants. They carry him to the lord's mansion and pretend to him that he is the lord, but that he has been mad and in his insanity believed himself a tinker. He is entertained with the play of the "Taming," and, falling asleep at its close, he is carried back to the ale-house door. However, he has gained something from

the joke played on him, for when he wakes he feels equal to taming thoroughly the wife of whom before he stood in such awe.

The "Spanish Tragedy," with its figures of Revenge and the ghost of Andrea, provides a fairly typical example of the tragic induction, derived chiefly from Seneca.

It will be noticed that the Induction in fact turns the principal plot of the drama into a play within a play. How far the Elizabethans were conscious that they thus made easier that "willing suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetic faith," it is difficult to say. It should be remembered that the Mediæval dream allegory had used the same sort of machinery when introducing its audience to the magic world of abstractions. The link between drama—especially historical drama—and the "Mirror for Magistrates" on the one hand, and the dream allegory on the other, is Sackville's Induction to the tragedy of the Duke of Buckingham.

Shakespeare's Fools provided a subtler method of giving the poet's standpoint. The pre-Shakespearean Fool seems to have been an improvisatore, who invented his own jokes and over whom the dramatist had very little control. Shakespeare seems to have quarrelled with the famous comic actor of his company, Kempe, about 1600, and the reference in "Hamlet" to the Fools that speak too much suggests that it was on this point they disagreed. The Fools in "Twelfth Night" and "King Lear" had both good voices, suggesting a different type of actor from the man who took the part of Peter in "Romeo and Juliet" or Dogberry or Shallow. It was apparently Shallow, not Falstaff, that Kempe acted. It seems probable that the boy who acted Lear's Fool also acted Ophelia. They both sing these snatches of song, which require a very carefully trained voice of a particular kind. This suggests another method by which Shakespeare was able to express himself—the inspired speeches of his mad

characters. Lear's Fool, indeed, is perhaps the most wonderful thing in all Shakespeare's art. For his madness and his love both give him an insight too poignant to be expressed in the unclouded vehicle of pure poetry, and his mental infirmity at once allows him to speak of what the sane dare not and provides him with expression all the more adequate because it has no commonplace beauty.

The fourth purpose of the Greek chorus, to provide relief from strain, some critics think Elizabethan dramatists effected by comic scenes. It used to be said that the great difference between Greek and Elizabethan drama was that the former produced a unity of impression keeping the same tone throughout, while the latter by introducing comic scenes relieved the strain or spoiled the impression. Now it is true that Greek tragedy very rarely indeed allowed any touch which could be regarded as comic, and that the Elizabethans after Shakespeare very often did. But it is almost a rule of Greek tragedy that when the tension is extreme the chorus should sing a song of remote fantastic beauty. For example, the wonderful chorus in "Hippolytus," when Phædra is bowed beneath a load of helpless sorrow and bitter shame, speaks of "the caverns where the sun scarce hath trod" and "the strand of the Daughters of the Sunset, the Apple-trees, the singing and the gold." Or again, the great chorus on man in the "Antigone" provides a contrast to the feeling of helplessness in the drama.

On the other hand, "comic" is a very inaccurate description of the scenes meant in Shakespeare, except in "Romeo and Juliet," and "Romeo and Juliet" is not a true tragedy. For the shipwreck in tragedy may have an external expression or symbol, as when Othello kills Desdemona, but the true catastrophe is of the soul, and no doubt ever blights the blossom of Romeo and Juliet's love. The typical comic scene in Shakespeare's tragedy

is the grave-diggers' scene in "Hamlet," which never gave "relief" to anyone who understood the play. It is to bring out the physical aspect of corruption, to let us see the crude world pressing on Hamlet's soul. Its mirth is ghoulish mirth. Similarly in "Lear," the comic "relief" provided is of the type of the fantastic trial scene, where Lear in his madness thinks he is arraigning his daughters. The authenticity of the porter in "Macbeth" has been questioned by some critics, but he is of the same element as "Hamlet's" grave-diggers. There is a clown in "Othello," but very few readers remember his existence. In fact, Iago in his character of bluff, honest fellow says the sort of things for which the so-called comic characters in Shakespeare's tragedy are introduced. Compare, for example, his conversation with Desdemona, in which he girds at women, using, as Desdemona says, "old fond Paradoxes, to make Fooles laugh i' the ale house," and then, when he has described a good woman, he finishes :

" She was a wight (if ever such wights were)
To suckle Fooles, and chronicle small Beere."

Iago really believes the gross things he says, but like the professional fool he is allowed to speak them, because the other persons in the play believe it all a pose—the disguise of a specially true soul. The truth is that Shakespeare does not believe in "relief."

The catastrophe in Greek plays took place off the stage and was described to the audience by a messenger in an elaborate speech. The messenger's speech was the second element in Greek drama, being clearly the tale told by the poet to rest his singers. Occasionally he is given a faintly dramatic character, and he always describes the catastrophe as a thing seen, but his connexion with the chief persons is never close enough to allow the clearness of his narrative to be affected by personal emotions.

The typical catastrophe of English drama takes place on the stage, but Shakespeare and his successors make use of a comparatively short narrative speech for some of the minor episodes. Shakespeare seems to have used it consciously to eke out the scanty resources of his stage and actors. Queen Gertrude's description of Ophelia's death, which finally links her memory with flowers; Jaques's description of the dying deer; the gentleman's description of Cordelia's reception of the news of Lear's state; the other unnamed gentleman's description of the recognition scene in the "*Winter's Tale*": all these are short messengers' speeches, though the first two have some—it is doubtful how much—dramatic flavour. In Shakespeare's theatre boys acted the women's parts, and he seems to have become increasingly conscious of their inadequacy to the great moments. The messenger's speech used with greater frequency as time went on is probably partly to be accounted for in this way.

It is sometimes assumed that Greek dramatists avoided the catastrophe on the stage (while the Elizabethans, including Shakespeare, adopted it) because of their superior sensibility and sense of fitness. But the explanation is scarcely admissible. The Greeks did not avoid other horrors. *Oedipus*, for example, came on to the stage with a mask representing the bleeding eye-sockets from which he has torn his eyes, and though no death actually takes place on the stage we have in many cases the cries of the victim, which is much more horrible. The Greeks were probably led to the convention by the natural growth of their drama and retained it as convenient. It is one of the arguments against the liturgical or clerical origin of English drama that the catastrophe takes place on the stage in all but definite classical imitations.

The use of physical horror is far rarer in Shakespeare and his contemporaries than is sometimes implied. It is commonest in Marlowe and is closely connected with

the superman hero. It is difficult to prove that a virtue is not practised for ulterior motives—the placating in the last resort of a righteous Divine judge—but a vice is felt to be practised for its own sake, and this is especially true of cruelty. Hence we get these horrors, e.g. Tamburlane's treatment of the Kings. It is true that in the Revenge tragedy Shakespeare took over the holocaust of deaths at the end of the play, but this does not give physical horror. A much more difficult incident to defend is the blinding of Gloucester in "King Lear." It can be defended, though it is almost impossible to act the passage at the present day. The explanation of it is connected with some formal characteristics to which I must draw attention. *

The Greek and Elizabethan theatres were alike apparently in having no curtain. A Greek play was divided into the equivalent of acts by the songs of the chorus. An Elizabethan play was sometimes apparently not divided at all. An act comes to an end when all the persons have left the stage, and it is probable that in such intervals the clown amused the audience by jokes and tumbling. In a Greek tragedy the emotion works up to a climax about a third from the end, and something approaching a solution brings the play to a close. In a Shakespearean—and indeed all popular Elizabethan plays—the catastrophe came at the end. The explanation is very simple. Without a curtain persons supposed to be dead could not be got off the stage in any great numbers. Hamlet may kill Polonius in the middle of the play and carry him off on his back, but some sort of excuse has to be given for it. There really is no point at all in Hamlet's removing the body and hiding it, for he never hoped to conceal the murder. Shakespeare utilizes his necessity to suggest a certain half-mad irreverence in Hamlet's treatment of the dead man, but he would not have had the incident at all, if he had had a curtain. Notice that it is quite possibly a

dummy figure that Hamlet carries, for Polonius never speaks after he has been drawn forth from behind the arras. It is significant that Ophelia, whose part must have been taken by a fairly slender and light boy, dies off the stage.

But the audience liked to be thrilled and the end of the fifth act is a long time to wait for the climax—far longer than the Greek audience had to wait. So Shakespeare had to give some intermediate attraction. An examination of the tragedies will show that roughly in the third act of his tragedies he did provide something certain to excite his audiences, something, perhaps, that was the craze of the moment. I say roughly, because it is quite possible that there were no divisions into acts in Shakespeare's theatre while he was in London. Thus the murder of Cæsar and the great speech of Antony occupy the third act in "*Julius Cæsar*." The play-scene, the scene with the ghost in the Queen's bedchamber, including the murder of Polonius; Hamlet's opportunity of killing the King as he prays—all occur in the third act of "*Hamlet*." "*Macbeth*" has been reconstructed, and a certain shifting of the weight of the play has resulted, but the banquet with the ghost of Banquo comes in the third act, and the scene in the witches' cave, where Macbeth sees the vision of the Kings of Scotland, is at the very beginning of the fourth.

The third act of "*Lear*" coincides almost exactly with his madness, the main incident from the sub-plot being the blinding of Gloucester. Now a little before the time "*Lear*" was composed "*The Spanish Tragedy*" was revived, additions were made to the madness of Hieronimo, and in this form the play was very successful. Madness then, and particularly perhaps the madness of an old man, was apparently an attraction of the time. The third act of "*Lear*" is filled with mad voices. There is Edgar's simulated madness, the delicate, pathetic lunacy of the Fool and the terrible

inspired madness of Lear. But it will be noticed that in most of the tragedies the third act is a climax both of spiritual and of physical horror, an appeal, perhaps, to two different elements in the audience. The blinding of Gloucester is the physical climax. But Shakespeare, of course, would not have been justified artistically by the fact that his audience demanded crude horrors. There must have been some purely artistic reason to influence the poet. Now, apart from this one incident, Lear's daughters never positively do anything grossly cruel. Their prototypes in the earlier play had tried to murder their father: Goneril and Regan never openly do anything like that. Indeed up almost to the third act it is possible to maintain that the daughters were in the right and dealing as considerately as might be with an unmanageable old man. It was essential to give Lear's feeling of the hard selfishness and cruelty of his daughters an objective expression, to save his passion from degenerating into a sordid domestic squabble. The scene with Gloucester does this effectively.

In Greek drama there is throughout a tendency to balance of form. Normally, in dialogue as in the chorric odes, speech corresponded to speech in length, and except in "Stichomythia" (dialogue carried on in single epigrammatic lines) the tendency was to long set speeches. This was imitated by the Latin tragedians and we see its effect in "Gorboduc." What taught Kyd and Shakespeare to copy nature and avoid this balanced dialogue has never been clearly explained. It is at least possible that the example of Folk-plays—"country Morals"—was an important factor.

In tracing influences and descents in Elizabethan drama one tendency has been overlooked to a curious extent. The Elizabethan period had barely escaped from the Medieval communal type of art, art in which the individual is apt to be merged in the crowd and in

which that rather doubtful quality originality was distrusted. The Italian critic Vida exhorted his disciples to "steal" and "say a far other thing" in the words of a predecessor. The traditional forms, that is to say, were to be kept, but the individual soul moving within them was to give them a new life. Now this is exactly what Elizabethan dramatists, and in particular Shakespeare, did. It accounts for Greene's bitter taunt of the "upstart crow beautified with our feathers." He borrowed stage situations, character outlines, even fragments of dialogue, but filled them with a different meaning. The subtlety of meaning which critics like Professor A. C. Bradley and Professor Dowden have worked out in Shakespeare's characters would have been incomprehensible to a contemporary audience but for this fact. It gave to Hamlet and his like that appearance of being "in the round," which justifies Shakespeare's boast of "holding the mirror up to Nature," that feeling of historical truth which has led imaginative critics to discuss the early life of the dramatist's puppets. Hamlet, for example, is based on several similar figures each with his own stage life, and the audience and dramatist alike take for granted that he has certain connexions, qualities and experiences.

The stage situations are perhaps at once the safest and the most neglected clue to the genesis of the plays. It will be seen later on how a series of stage situations betray the existence of a group of Revenge plays linked with "Hamlet" on the one hand and "Macbeth" on the other. The comparison of Shakespeare's handling of such forms with that of a man like Marston gives the most convincing proof of his supremacy. For example, in Marston's "Antonio's Revenge" there is a scene corresponding to the scene in the Queen's bed-chamber in "Hamlet." In Shakespeare, Hamlet in a state of great excitement has been summoned to his mother to explain his conduct, Polonius being concealed

behind the arras. When he is in the crisis of his emotion the ghost appears to him to remind him of his "almost blunted purpose," but the Queen sees and hears nothing. In Marston, Antonio's mother is about to get into bed, and drawing back the curtain discovers the ghost of her murdered husband. Antonio comes in later, and the three—ghost-father, mother and son—converse for some time, discussing the best means of revenge. Maria is in no way guilty of her husband's death, but she was about to yield to the villain's importunity and marry him. The domesticity of the scene completely spoils any feeling of awe for the ghost.

Early Court drama like "Gorboduc," for example, and probably Folk drama, were usually preceded by dumb shows explanatory of the moral idea of the play. "Gorboduc" indeed had one before each act, but the first seems to refer to the whole play. It is a concrete presentment of the fable of the man who tried to break a bundle of twigs and failed until he drew them out one by one. We are told that this signified the danger to kingdoms of civil strife exemplified in the play. That these dumb shows were allegorical explains probably Ophelia's questions to Hamlet in the play scene. She expects the dumb show to be allegorical of what is to follow and thinks that Hamlet, who has arranged the entertainment, will be able to expound it.

This sort of dumb show Shakespeare did not use, so far as we know. A trace of it is to be found in the figure of Rumour, "painted full of tongues," who speaks the Prologue to the second part of "Henry IV." On the other hand, late in his career, when he had the resources of the Stuart Court at his disposal, he did introduce shows into the body of the play. Compare, for example, the visions which the witches conjure up for Macbeth and the dreams in "Pericles" and in "Cymbeline." The present writer suspects that such a curiously undramatic scene as that in the "Winter's

Tale" where the three gentlemen tell one another of the recognition of Perdita may be the reading version of what was acted in dumb show in the theatre.

Early Elizabethan drama seems to have had an improvised element in it, and to give attraction and an up-to-date flavour one or two new speeches might be inserted. This we gather from two pieces of evidence, though we might have guessed it from Hamlet's proposal to write a speech for insertion in the play to be presented before his uncle. In the edition of Hughes' "Misfortunes of Arthur," printed in 1587, we are told that certain speeches are added (cf. text). Again, in "The Pilgrimage to Parnassus," an amateur play acted by the undergraduates of St. John's College, Cambridge, we find Kempe the comic and Burbage the tragic actor in Shakespeare's company represented discussing the advantages of engaging two scholars. Burbage suggests that they may be useful because besides acting they may be able "to pen a part." The Fools seemed to have claimed much the licence of a "star" comic actor in a modern pantomime, but Shakespeare at least was not inclined to grant it. "Let the Fool speak no more than is set down for him," says Hamlet. It is significant that about 1600, when "Hamlet" was probably written, Kempe left Shakespeare's company, and his place seems to have been taken by a much younger actor, who was probably more amenable to the dramatist's instructions.

The public stage in Elizabeth's time had very primitive attempts at scene representation. Sidney in his "Defence of Poetry" is quite explicit on this point. But some appeal to the eye is needful with a half-educated audience, and this seems to have been supplied by the dresses. Now gorgeous dress was exceedingly expensive, and the ordinary companies would not be able to afford a large wardrobe. On the other hand, no play had what we should consider a long run and no play

was ever repeated on two consecutive nights.¹ In consequence the same dresses must have been used again and again without much alteration. These circumstances must have tended to accentuate the original conventionality in dramatic types. When the Revenge hero appeared in his "customary suit of solemn black," it would give the imagination of the audience a strong lead to the traditional type. Sometimes a phrase gives an interesting hint of a prototype we should not have suspected. For example, Lear's words about Regan, "Vanity, the puppet," suggest that she wore the dress originally designed for Vanity in the *Moralities* and throw light on her character. It must be remembered that the principal actors in an Elizabethan company were permanent members, and that a dramatist attached as Shakespeare was to a particular company and interested in it financially would write his plays with the resources of the company in mind. There was, for example, no use drawing a youthful hero like Romeo when your chief tragic actor was middle-aged and inclined to be stout. So Shakespeare after 1603 gives us Othello and Antony in "Antony and Cleopatra." Again, Lear's Fool and Cordelia must apparently have been acted by one boy-actor, which explains why they are never on the stage together. In "Othello" he was probably Desdemona, which accounts for the practical absence of a Fool.

Doubling of parts was, however, probably not very common in the London theatres after 1594. Very early plays date themselves partly by plots which involve few trained actors. For example, Chapman's "Blind Beggar of Alexandria" is clearly early. The principal, indeed almost the only real character, is the pretended Blind Beggar, really a certain Cleanthes, who in various disguises wins the love of the Queen of

¹ There are two apparent exceptions to this recorded in Henslowe's "Diary."

Egypt and of two other women and finally makes himself Emperor. It is startling to find that the dramatist seems to expect us to be pleased with this villain's success, and that he does so is probably due to the farcical conception still underlying the drama. Farce is essentially unmoral : its attraction is that of a *tour de force*. We are pleased with the sheer energy and resource of the principal characters and get the same satisfaction from it that we get from an exhibition of physical strength and skill. This, it may be noticed, is the secret of the "Taming of the Shrew." Petruchio's high spirits carry through his rather ugly plot and his masterfulness wins our sympathy, as it does Katherine's heart. All our early popular comedy has a touch of this quality. It is after all the means by which a few luckily-starred, if not too sensitive, people escape from the yoke of Fate.

An Elizabethan theatre was provided with a long platform stage and had no curtain. The earlier houses were circular, and it is supposed that a gallery ran round the back of the stage and over the doors on either side by which the actors entered. About half-way down the stage stood two pillars supporting a canopy. The space under the gallery could be curtained off. This represented Desdemona's bed, the cave in which Ferdinand and Miranda are discovered at chess, etc. The balcony appears often in the early plays—in "Romeo and Juliet," in the "Taming of the Shrew," etc. Actors had to walk a considerable way up the stage, and the frequent "See, where he comes" of some person on the stage as the chief person advances is an indication of this.

Further, the young gallants sat *on* the stage, down the sides, on stools which they hired at the door. They were noisy and ill-mannered, coming late, smoking and talking if the dramatist's art failed to grip them. Now this should be remembered in studying opening scenes.

If you examine early plays like "Romeo and Juliet," you find the dramatist trying to make his explanatory opening scenes intelligible even if the dialogue is drowned in the impertinent noise of the young gentlemen. That play opens with a street fight between the servants of Montague and those of Capulet. They would, like all men-servants, wear the badges of the Houses served, and the groundlings (the humbler part of the audience who paid to stand on the floor of the House), well accustomed to such skirmishes, would easily grasp, though they heard no word, that the foundation of the play was a feud between the two great Houses. Scenes of a similar sort occur in "Henry VI."

Compare with this the opening scene of "Othello." That play was first produced in the great Banqueting Hall of King James, and the audience would not be permitted to interfere with the King's enjoyment of the piece. Shakespeare, therefore, could count on his dialogue being heard. Here he is not dealing with well-known characters, and Iago is to appear to Othello and Desdemona a blunt, honest fellow. The audience must know that he is in reality a subtle villain, and so the author sets him to talk to the jealous dolt Rodrigo. He has to convince Rodrigo that in spite of appearances he is really on his side and against Othello, and so he explains to him the pretext of his hatred. Moreover, it is night, and in the darkness Iago can let himself go. The foul language in which he calls to Brabantio the news of his daughter's marriage at once gives us an insight into the corruption of his mind and infuriates Brabantio more than a plain recital would do. When Brabantio actually enters with light Iago has disappeared, and we are left with the feeling that he is a presence of the night.

Finally, the form of the plays—rhyming verse, blank verse, doggerel, prose—has not yet been adequately studied. Marlowe claimed to have redeemed the drama

from "rhyming mother-wits," and Shakespeare's very early plays have a considerable amount of rhyme. This is different from the doggerel in which, for instance, proverbial and commonplace philosophy is conveyed, or in which Hamlet writes to Ophelia. Shakespeare's blank verse tends at first to stop at the end of a line, but as time goes on the sense overflows into larger and larger paragraphs and generally closes in the middle of a line. End-stopped lines are supposed to be an infallible test of early writing, but that plays can be dated with any certainty according to their number of run-on lines recent research has not proved.

The use of prose, especially by Shakespeare, is particularly interesting. It is true that he sometimes uses it when his matter does not seem worth the trouble of putting it into metre (cf. the end of "Measure for Measure"). On the other hand, certain characters always speak in prose, Falstaff being the chief. Again, Hamlet sometimes speaks prose. The student should make an hypothesis of his own and see how many examples it would explain. Why, for example, does Hamlet speak in prose the great speech, "What a piece of work is man!"?

The out-and-out villain speaks prose as a rule, cf. Edmund in "Lear" and Iago in "Othello." When such people drop into verse it means that their treachery is at its height. See, for example, the great temptation scene in "Othello," where Iago kneels and in almost blasphemous parody of his victim calls to witness the "ever-burning lights above" to his devotion to Othello's service.

Lastly, something must be said on the theory of drama. There is a modern tendency to ignore such questions and to ask whether the dramatist ever thought of them, but there is really no doubt of the value for the student of some conception of the sort. Just as in reproducing a map from memory it is essential to start with an

approximate pattern (e.g. a triangle with one very acute angle for India), so in order to grasp the general character of a play some knowledge of the normal form is needed.

Of the three types of plays recognized in the Shakespeare First Folio—Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies—the last has been the most discussed and is clearest in outline.

1. Tragedy must end in some tremendous catastrophe involving in Elizabethan practice the death of the principal character.

2. The catastrophe must not be the result of mere accident, but must be brought about by some essential trait in the character of the hero acting either directly or through its effect on other persons.

3. The hero must nevertheless have in him something which outweighs his defects and interests us in him so that we care for his fate more than for anything else in the play. The problem then is, why should a picture of the misfortunes of some one in whom we are thus interested afford us any satisfaction? No final answer has yet been found. Aristotle said that the spectacle by rousing in us pity and fear purges us of these emotions, and this remains the best explanation. Just as a great calamity sweeps from our minds the petty irritations of our common life, so the flood of æsthetic emotion lifts us above them.

In the drama of Marlowe the satisfaction appears to depend, not on the excitement of the catastrophe, but on the assertion of the greatness of man's spirit; and this seems to have been the theme also of Senecan tragedy. It will be remembered that the first part of *Tamburlaine* ends, not in his death, but in his triumph, and yet we feel that the peculiar note of tragedy has been struck. We have the true tragic sense of liberation. Kyd also asserted the independence of the spirit of man, if he is prepared to face pain and death.

It is really much more difficult than is always recognized to be sure what constituted Shakespeare's view of the tragic satisfaction or even that he believed in it. It is possibly true that Lear is a better man at the end of the play than he was at the beginning, and that without his suffering he would not have learned sympathy with his kind ; but this does not apply either to Hamlet or to Othello, and even in the case of King Lear it does not explain the æsthetic appeal. That depends on something more profound.

The student, after getting the story of the tragedy quite clear, should concentrate first on the character of the hero. Ask yourself whether his creator considered him ideally perfect—in which case the appeal probably lies in the spectacle of a single human soul defying the universe ; or flawed—in which case the defect will bring about the catastrophe. It is true that in the Revenge Play type we have frequently the villain-hero, but the interest there depends rather on his courage and independence of man and God than on his villainy. This is particularly true of pre-Shakespearean plays. It is remarkable that the post-Shakespearean drama was apt to combine plots involving unnatural crimes and vicious passions with a somewhat shallow conventional morality.

History plays seem in Shakespeare's hands to represent the compromise of life. They may end in catastrophe or in triumph, but the catastrophe is apt to be undignified and the triumph won at a price. Again, we may say that in the Histories Shakespeare is dealing with the nation as hero. The hero in this case is immortal and his tale cannot be a true tragedy ; while on the other hand there can never be the true comedy feeling of an established and final harmony. Apart from Shakespeare, Histories are almost entirely inspired by patriotism, often of a rather rabid type.

There is the greatest variety in the section entitled

“Comedy,” and critics generally distinguish sharply between Comedies and Romances in Reconciliation plays. We are apt to expect a comedy to aim chiefly at making us laugh, but, although there are extremely funny passages, it is clear that this is not the main character of any but one or two early plays. The Romances are four—“Cymbeline,” “Winter’s Tale,” “The Tempest,” and the play not contained in the First Folio—“Pericles.” “Cymbeline” is actually printed at the end of the Tragedies for reasons which can only be conjectured. Romances are always concerned with two generations, and cover the events of many years. There is an element of the marvellous in them, and the emphasis on repentance and forgiveness is very marked. But they are, indeed, the natural development of the plays of the great period. “As You Like It” deals also with two generations, with wrongs committed and then repentance, forgiveness and restitution. In the earlier play the stress is laid on the actions and emotions of the younger folk, while in the later plays the older generation is most fully portrayed.

But before Shakespeare arrived at this conception of Comedy, he had tried various types. In “The Comedy of Errors,” founded on a translation of a Latin comedy, he had produced an example of pure farce. The humour in a farce generally consists of violent action provoked by misunderstanding of a gross kind. There is an element of farce, therefore, in the “Taming of the Shrew,” though the main appeal of the play is the stimulus of Petruchio’s high spirits. Probably the original conception of the “Merchant of Venice” was much the same. A youthful Shakespeare was probably pleased with the outwitting of the churlish old miser Shylock. It is the theme of youth and crabbed age. An older Shakespeare must have revised it and seen the story more through the eyes of Shylock and of Antonio, and the unity of the play has been destroyed.

“Love’s Labour’s Lost” and the “Midsummer Night’s Dream” are probably both Court Comedies, and have the superficiality of emotion which for whatever reason was associated with Court Comedy. A graceful and fanciful working up of the occasion for which the play was produced was the special character of a Court play, and it has been conjectured that the “Midsummer Night’s Dream” was written for a noble marriage.

But the Shakespearean theory of Comedy went much deeper than this, and has no classical exposition. Meredith’s “Essay on Comedy” is quite inapplicable. It may be suggested that his intent was to present a picture of an harmonious society in which each person’s individuality is fully developed and yet is in perfect tune with all the others. At the beginning of the play there is always an element of discord, which is resolved before the close. As in History, the hero of the play is rather Society as a whole than any person in it, and because of this we get at the end a sense of “happiness ever after.” In the last plays we have generally an incorrectly reported death, and the discovery of these mistakes gives a curious sense that “there’s nothing serious in mortality.” All existence is seen as one great web of being, so that although in tragedy Hamlet sickens at the thought :

“Imperious Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
May stop a wall to keep the wind away,”

in “The Tempest” the same thought becomes :

“Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.”

CHAPTER III

ORIGINS

IT is generally assumed, though it is not proved, that the Elizabethan drama developed out of the liturgy for Easter Day and Christmas Day. "About the year 800," writes Mr. Greg, "a general tendency to elaboration of ritual led to the insertion of new melodies in the recognized services. These melodies were originally sung to vowel sounds only, but soon words came to be written for them." "These texts often closely based on Scripture, and known as 'tropes' . . . in particular . . . attached themselves to the 'introit,' the chant sung by the choir" at Mass, "as the celebrant approaches the altar." The Gospel for Easter Day, which was used at this point, fell easily into a dialogue between the two parts of the choir. "Quem quaeritis in sepulcro, O Christi colæ," demanded one semi-chorus, while the other semi-chorus answered in the words of the women who came seeking the body. By the third quarter of the tenth century this dialogue of the choir had developed into a real tiny play, one member of the choir enacting the angel and seating himself at a tomb, while three others performed the parts of the Maries. The ordinary view is that the whole scene in the garden near the tomb as told in the different gospels was gradually added, as well as a lament by the Virgin and other women which mentioned the sufferings of Christ. This last led, it is supposed, to the enactment of the Passion itself.

The same sort of development took place from the

Christmas trope, which dealt with the angelic choir appearing to the shepherds. Finally a sermon, supposed to be by Augustine on the prophecies of Christ, was recast in the form of a metrical dialogue, and the prophets seem to have come forward in costume with appropriate symbols and recited their prophecies. From this, it is said, developed the Old Testament plays, and it should be noted that the fully developed miracle plays do not as a rule attempt to give all striking stories in the Old Testament, but only those connected with the Fall of Man and his Redemption and the stories symbolizing the Incarnation and Passion in some way.

The play of the prophets was at first used as a Prologue to either of the other two, and by 1300 the cycle had been formed by placing it as Prelude to the other two taken together. This elaboration is supposed to have made representation as part of the service and in church impossible, and the play was moved first to the churchyard and then to the market-place. Parallel to this change of place, we are told, there went on a change of performers. By 1311, when the Feast of Corpus Christi was instituted, the fully developed cycles were in England enacted in the market-place by the Trade Guilds, usually as part of the Corpus Christi festival.

It is probable that all important places, with the possible exception of London, had a miracle cycle, but only five fairly complete cycles exist—those of Chester, York, and Coventry, with a fourth sometimes referred to as the *Ludus Coventriæ*, but which we shall call, following Mr. Greg, the N. cycle. It is probable that it was acted by a professional company at any town. It has certainly no original connexion with Coventry. The fifth, the *Towneley* cycle, is so called from the owners of the MS., but it, like the first three, was most likely the play of a particular place. The cycles of Chester and York are good examples of different types.

The Chester plays were probably revised and edited, if not composed, by one man, "Done Randall, moonke of Chester Abbey." The complete MS., apparently of clerical origin, was in the hands of the corporation, and when, for example, the Smiths wished to revise their own play, they paid the corporation for permission to peruse the original. At York, on the other hand, the originals were the separate plays in the hands of the Guilds, and the corporation caused a "register" to be compiled. The MS. which we possess is a "register" made probably about 1475. The earliest MS. of the Chester cycle which has come down is a late copy of about 1591.

There were apparently two methods of presentation :

1. Each play was performed on its own movable stage over and over again at different places—as in a present-day pageant.
2. Several stationary stages were erected close together, and some scenes were probably performed simultaneously.

No one disputes the facts set out above : the question is whether these facts imply that the constructive impulse towards secular drama came from the Church and its liturgy, or whether the liturgy developed into drama because secular drama already existed and its appeal was so strong that the Church was forced to satisfy it. In this connexion we note :

1. That there is evidence of Robin Hood plays before 1400.
2. That all writers, particularly clerical writers, before 1400 regard plays and the seeing of plays as evil. It is possible to regard some of the strictures as due to early Protestant feeling, but it is noteworthy that the Banns of the Chester play, written in 1600, praise the attempt to tell Bible history in English.
3. If the liturgy really developed of its own nature into drama it is remarkable that there is "no saint play for which a traditional connexion with the liturgy can

be claimed," while on the other hand the St. George plays are an obvious attempt by the clergy to give a Christian turn to a Folk drama of glaringly pagan origin.

Very little is known of the Folk drama itself, and its importance has been much overlooked. The recent work by Miss Phillpotts, "The Elder Edda," has shown the probability of a widespread dramatic literature in Scandinavia, dealing originally with stories of the gods. One theory of the origin of the Robin Hood legend is that it developed out of a similar pagan myth, and it should be remembered that Robin Hood plays were acted all over the country. It seems unlikely that drama of Church origin should show so very little trace of classical influence, and the present writer therefore believes that Folk play was the chief factor in the development of English drama. Literary forms tend to remain stationary except in the presence of an external model or analogy, and as the model of the Miracle plays was not classical drama—Greek or Latin—it is most likely that it was Folk drama.

Two other names for dramatic forms were known in pre-Elizabethan times—the "Moral" and the "Interlude." The *dramatis personæ* of the Moral were abstractions, and its subject was usually the struggle of good and evil in the soul of man. The most famous example is "Everyman."

The Interlude was probably a moral with a political or sectarian purpose. The meaning of the name is doubtful, but Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's view that it means a play acted in the dull season in the great man's hall would explain a good many peculiarities. Its political bias would be coloured by the sympathies of the noble for whose entertainment it was performed.

History plays.—The way in which the Shakespearean chronicle History may have developed out of this moral-interlude is illustrated by the group of plays on the subject of King John. Bale's "King John" is a

violently Protestant play in which John himself is the only consistently historical name. The other persons are abstractions, though occasionally the abstract mask is dropped and Sedician becomes Stephen Langton. John himself is represented as a saintly victim of Papal treachery.

In the two parts of "The Troublesome Reign of King John" the abstractions have all disappeared, and John is approximately the John of history; the Widow England has gone and is replaced by the would-be heroic figure of Faulconbridge the Bastard; but the tone is still violently Protestant.

From Shakespeare's acknowledged play all religious bias has disappeared, and almost every line has been worked over with a purely artistic and dramatic purpose. It is not one of his great plays as a whole, but it is of unique importance to the student of Elizabethan drama and of dramatic art, so wonderful are the touches by which Shakespeare changes the rant of the older play into human speech.

The Trilogy formed by the two parts of "Henry IV" and "Henry V" seems to bear something the same relation to "The Famous Victories of Henry V." Falstaff appeared in Shakespeare's play originally as Sir John Oldcastle, the Lollard leader, whose private friendship with the Prince of Wales could not save him from persecution in the reign of Henry V. The treatment of Oldcastle gave offence to the Protestant party, and is sometimes adduced as evidence of Shakespeare's leaning to the older Church. But it should be noted that, as mentioned above, he had also dramatized the Protestant play of "King John," and that in both he omits in his acknowledged versions all direct reference to religious questions. It is true, however, that Falstaff seems at times to parody the Puritan party, and the Puritans were confounded with the Lollards by the Elizabethans.

Shakespeare's English History plays are finer than anything that had gone before, but they are a perfectly natural development of the type. No other famous literature, so far as we know, has anything of quite the same kind, but several other Englishmen probably about 1580 wrote chronicle plays which we do not attribute to Shakespeare chiefly because we think them so poor. They have the same crowded canvases, the same appearance of being dramatic memoirs of a particular King. In the three parts of "*Henry VI*" we can see him at work on this material as we can see him in "*King John*." Where he touches the people come alive, the incidents gain in vigour and probability ; but in these plays he has scarcely succeeded in giving an impression of unity. Moreover, they are too uniformly violent. Violent also is "*Richard III*," but here at last all events and persons are grouped round the central figure so that the Chronicle has become a drama—or perhaps a melodrama. That play is, however, not a mere development of the type. Some other model has influenced the writer. "*Richard II*," on the other hand, is a return to the main line. In some ways it is a weaker work than "*Richard III*," for its purpose is by no means clear, and some of the figures—York and his son Aumerle in particular—are so faintly sketched that they might as well have been nameless courtiers. But there is, on examination, real unity in the play—particularly when taken with "*Henry IV*" and "*Henry V*" as part of a tetralogy—and the piece is carefully composed in the painter's sense of the word.

Richard with his friends and followers, graceful, ineffectual, aristocratic, is set over against Bolingbroke and his supporters, practical schemers, altogether lacking in refinement, and for that reason better fitted to a material world. This grouping lifts the play far above such a mere welter of contending interests as "*Henry VI*." When we turn to "*Henry IV*" we find that a

new element has been introduced : persons and incidents not known to history are mingled with those founded on the chronicler. This, Quiller-Couch suggests, is the beginning of historical romance such as Scott gives us. But Shakespeare is not the inventor. That honour belongs to a man whose extremely unpleasant personal character has perhaps deflected from him the interest that his influence on dramatic history should have excited. I mean the spy and informer Antony Munday, who in his two plays, "The Downfall" and "The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington" (i.e. Robin Hood), introduced Richard Cœur de Lion, Prince John, and Queen Eleanor their mother into a tale, partly invented, partly traditional, of Robin Hood and his men.

Comedy.—English comedy appears early in certain passages of the Mystery plays. It may have been a concession granted to the less serious element among actors and audience by the priests that such persons as Noah's wife were allowed to be the subject of rude satire. It is, however, remarkable, since the "Adoration of the Shepherds" was according to the usual hypothesis one of the two main starting-points of the liturgical drama, that these shepherds are always treated with a certain freedom, and that they become the characters in a little comedy inserted in the Towneley cycle. They are always vivid personalities and sit "simply chatting in a rustic row" of their sheep and their domestic affairs. They give charming gifts to the Holy Child : "a bob of cherries," a horn-spoon, a whistle fashioned by the giver himself. The play of "Mak and the Shepherds" concerns the tricks of the dishonest Mak. He steals a sheep, while his fellows are sleeping, and takes it home to his wife. The others, awakening, suspect and go to his poor cottage. Mak pretends that his wife has just borne a child and protests against her being disturbed. The others, nevertheless, enter and find

the woman in bed and an apparent child in a rude cradle beside her. They find nothing suspicious and are going away ashamed, when one, to make amends, approaches the cradle with a simple gift, and the missing sheep is discovered. It is noticeable that the same properties were probably used for the serious shepherd play, and the whole thing looks like a parody. It shows, however, very considerable comic powers.

In the moralities the evil personages are often treated with a somewhat broad humour, and according to some writers the Vice was the ancestor of the Clown or Fool.

Along with the comic episodes of the Mysteries go such plays as "Gammer Gurton's Needle." It is an exceedingly broad picture of English village life. Gammer Gurton is mending her man's breeches, when she is interrupted and leaves the needle sticking in the patch. After an interval she again requires her needle —a fairly valuable article. Search is made for it everywhere and one person after another is involved in the search. Finally the wearer of the breeches discovers it, when he attempts to sit down. The existence of a play like this, showing very considerable skill in its way and without any link with the mysteries, raises interesting problems of origin. But to Shakespeare's comedy it can have given little more than the comic episodes above mentioned had already done.

A second and very important element were the masques or entertainments provided for the sovereign. We hear of them first in the reign of Richard II, when they seem to have been little more than a procession of disguised persons who brought gifts for the King. In the reign of Henry VIII, the King himself with certain of his gentlemen came a-masking to a great entertainment at Wolsey's palace. They were disguised as Russians and pretended not to be able to speak English. Elizabeth in her progress was often

received at towns and villages by single individuals in groups dressed to represent mythological personages, who welcomed her in allegorical verses. These progresses are elaborately described by Nichols in his "Progresses of Queen Elizabeth," and are of great importance to the history of drama. A celebrated instance is the great entertainment which Leicester provided at Kenilworth in 1576, and of which luckily we have contemporary record.

Probably such festivities gave Elizabeth a taste for the kind of thing; but a masque required expensive accessories, and Elizabeth preferred to leave them to her courtiers for the most part to present before her. The masque proper did not come into its own till the accession of the Stuart Dynasty, who lavished large sums of money on it. Nevertheless the masque seems to have been regarded as the proper form for Court theatricals, and plays written to be presented at Court always partake of that nature.

Peele's "Arraignment of Paris" is a favourable example of the kind of thing. It is roughly the story of Tennyson's "Œnone" with an addition in which Paris is summoned before the gods and accused of partiality. He is dismissed to his fate, but Venus is forced to re-deliver the ball for fresh judgment. With curious confusion Diana is this time appointed judge and brings harmony by her decision that the prize of beauty is due to none of the three, but to the nymph Eliza or Zabeta. This outrageous flattery of the Queen is blended in Peele's musical lines with love for England, and the following passage may have suggested Shakespeare's speech of dying Gaunt :

" There wons within these pleasant shady woods
 Where neither storm nor sun's distemperature
 Have power to hurt by cruel heat or cold,
 Under the climate of the milder heaven . . .
 Where whistling winds made music 'mong the trees,

Far from disturbance of our country gods,
 Amids the cypress-springs a gracious nymph
 That honours Dian for her chastity . . .
 The place Elizium hight, and of the place
 Her name that governs there Eliza is,
 A kingdom that may well compare with mine,
 An ancient seat of Kings, a second Troy
 Y-compassed round with a commodious sea."

But the chief charm of the play lies in the delightful descriptions of the valley where "ye may not see for peeping flowers the grass," and the songs, which though without much meaning, are wonderfully tuneful. The best is perhaps the duet of OEnone and Paris.

OENONE. Fair and fair and twice so fair
 As fair as any may be
 The fairest shepherd on our green
 A love for any lady.

PARIS (*echoes*). Fair and fair and twice so fair
 As fair as any may be
 Thy love is fair for thee alone
 And for no other lady.

OENONE. My love is fair, my love is gay,
 As fresh as bin the flowers in May
 And of my love my roundelay
 My merry, merry, merry roundelay
 Concludes with Cupid's curse—
 They that do change old love for new
 Pray gods they change for worse.

Bullen says of the "Arraignment," "when we would fain forget life's perplexities, we shall find the pretty cadences of Peele's Pastoral as grateful as the plashing of fountains in the dog-days." Nashe calls him "the chief supporter of pleasance now living," which means, I suppose, much the same. But there are hints of the uplift of Tennyson's Pallas in the speech with which Peele's goddess of Wisdom and of War appeals to Paris :

“ Me list not tempt thee with decaying wealth
Which is embas’d by want of lusty health
But if thou have a mind to fly above
Y-crown’d with fame, near to the scat of Jove
If thou aspire to wisdom’s worthiness
Whereof thou mayst not see the bright(e)ness
If thou desire honour of chivalry . . .
Myself for guerdon shall on thee bestow.”

It seems probable that Peele set the fashion, but the type of play is generally connected with Lyly’s name. Lyly died in 1606, but the great vogue of his plays seems to have been from 1584 to 1594, the years during which we know nothing of Shakespeare. Shakespeare’s first work to be acted at Court was probably “ *Love’s Labour’s Lost*,” which is manifestly influenced by Lyly’s ideals.

Lyly’s plays were mostly written to be acted by the Children of the Chapel, i.e. the choir boys attached to the Court. It is likely enough that his original purpose was the instruction of the boys rather than the amusement of the Court. Lyly was schoolmaster to the Children of the Chapel, and in the time of Elizabeth, and even before that, schoolmasters had shown considerable enterprise in making their boys act Terence and Plautus in the original or in translation, and in writing for them plays in Latin or English. The Universities also produced Latin plays, especially on the occasion of royal visits. Latin comedy is, then, another quite important tributary to the river of Elizabethan plays, and that its influence was brought to bear on Shakespeare is proved by “ *The Comedy of Errors*. ” That play is an adaptation of the “ *Menaechmi* ” of Plautus, an English translation of which exists. It is worth noting that Shakespeare produced near the beginning of his career two comedies—“ *The Errors* ” and “ *Love’s Labour’s Lost* ”—both of which suggest literary and scholarly rather than popular origins.

But besides the broad familiar comedy such as "Gammer Gurton," or the scholarly comedy such as Lylly's "Campaspe," or the translations from Plautus, the early Elizabethans knew also another type which it is usual to connect with the name of Greene and which produced its finest flower in "As You Like It." Greene's "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay" and "George-a-Greene," which is of doubtful authorship, are the best pre-Shakespearean examples. The basis of the plays is a picture of English country life into which royal or noble personages stray and there lose their hearts to real or pretended shepherd maids. Lylly had introduced shepherds, but they are the shepherds of classical pastoral. The note of these plays is the fact that the characters are real country folk and the sports introduced are real country sports. It is likely enough that Greene did some service to this form of comedy, but it would be curious if a University wit originated it. In fact, Greene's "Friar Bacon" reminds us a good deal of Munday's (probably) earlier comedy, "John a Kent and John a Cumber," and certain connexions between "As You like It" and the Robin Hood legend and plays (Munday's special preserve) suggest that here again Munday was the chief forerunner.

Just as critics have derived Elizabethan drama generally from the liturgical play, so also they have called Marlowe the Father of English tragedy. That Marlowe was an important and beneficent influence is certain; but his view of the tragic theme is totally different from that of the Mediæval drama on the one hand and the Shakespearean school on the other. In theme the Mysteries were fundamentally tragic in the best Greek tradition, but the Mediæval use of the word was so limited as to obscure this connexion. Chaucer tells us that a tragedy is "a story of them that have been in great prosperity and are afterwards fallen into

misery," and the "Monk's Tale" gives a catalogue of such tragedies. Now it is true that Adam and Eve cast out of the Garden are tragic in this sense, but that part of the drama was a mere prologue, and the chief emphasis was laid in Christ's humble birth, passion and victory. The plays ended on a note of transcendent triumph. Again, Marlowe's plays might be described by the Mediæval formula, but a sympathetic study shows at once that the æsthetic satisfaction he provides lies chiefly in the spectacle of the unconquerable spirit of man. The mediæval satisfaction was undoubtedly the sheer thrill of awe produced by tremendous calamity. But in spite of the disconnection between "tragedy" and any drama known to the men of the fifteenth century, it was out of such tales that Elizabethan tragedy most probably developed. Bochas' (Boccaccio's) "Fall of Princes," translated by Lydgate, and its English sequel, "The Mirror for Magistrates," provided both the stories and the atmosphere of the early tragedies. Sackville's Induction to the "Fall of the Duke of Buckingham" is one of the sources that produced the ghostly Induction of the "Spanish Tragedy" and ultimately the Ghost in "Hamlet." It is perhaps merely a curious coincidence that Sackville was also the author of "Gorboduc," a drama whose subject was taken from the stories in the "Mirror for Magistrates," but whose form was modelled on that of Seneca's tragedies. His contemporaries, at least, seem to have given him the credit of directing Elizabethan drama into this channel. "Gorboduc" could never appeal, however, to a popular audience. It is very probable that Seneca's dramas were intended for recital in a private house rather than performance, and their long sententious speeches and almost complete lack of action unfitted them for a public stage, and "Gorboduc" reproduces these peculiarities. But some unknown genius had conceived the idea of combining

classical plots, and even incidents of classical drama, with the method of presentation of the *Mysteries*. It may have been John Pickeryng, who in 1567 had brought out what he called an “Enterlude of Vice” on the subject of Orestes’ vengeance for his father’s death, or Preston, whose “Cambises” combined the story given in Herodotus with comic passages with a Vice. Edwards’s plays “Damon and Pythias” and “Palamon and Arcite” were not tragic, but their dignified subject gives them a natural place in the development of tragedy, and as they were remarkably successful when presented before the Queen they probably influenced later writers. With Hughes’ “Misfortunes of Arthur” we get at last a play which though crudely horrible melodrama unites a really tragic plot and one of native origin with dialogue that occasionally sounds like the speech of human beings in moments of great emotion.

Hughes was not entirely responsible for the “Misfortunes,” nor Sackville for “Gorboduc”; both were the productions of groups of young men of the Inns of Court. Kyd’s “Spanish Tragedy” is clearly the outcome of the same sort of training, which in his case almost certainly included the reading of Greek drama in the original. He is much more closely allied to Hughes than he is to Marlowe, although he was for a time so intimate with Marlowe that they shared rooms. There is considerable evidence that a crude form of “Macbeth” was Shakespeare’s first “making.” If so it probably bore considerable resemblance to the “Misfortunes.” We shall see later how close akin were “The Spanish Tragedy” and the early “Hamlet,” and also how the final “Macbeth” and “Othello” are related to “Hamlet.” “Julius Cæsar,” some critics hold, belongs also to the Revenge group, and it has, of course, certain characteristics of the group—the ghost, the stress on honour, the assertion of virtue in the murder—but Shakespeare was probably working

with several previous plays before him, plays which possibly were connected rather with Edwards's "*Damon and Pythias*" than with true tragedies. The violation of the friendship between Cæsar and Brutus and the relation of Cassius to Brutus may have been the central interest of the older plays, and connect "*Julius Cæsar*" with the themes of Hughes.

"*Romeo and Juliet*" has never been felt to be a true tragedy, but its predecessor is probably "*Gismonde of Salerne*," which also emanates from the Inns of Court. Romantic love between a man and a woman was not felt by the Greeks to be a suitable subject for great drama, and the climax of the play where Gismonde's father sends her lover's heart and blood to her in a golden cup suggests rather the similar savagery of the *Nibelungenlied* than even the Senecan corruptions of Greek incidents. Love tragedies, in fact, are probably derived from very late Greek or mediæval sources. They certainly owe some of their episodes to Greek romances. There is likely enough a memory of Phædra's nurse in *Juliet*'s, but the Mediæval intermediary, whatever it was, has far more part in her. The love tragedy is, in fact, the most difficult dramatic form to account for, and is very possibly the most entirely original creation of Shakespeare's genius.

CHAPTER IV

THE PREDECESSORS

THE statement that Elizabethan drama centres in Shakespeare is especially true of Comedy. He gathers up the hints of his predecessors and creates what is a unique form from among the literatures of the world. His successors, too, draw their conception of comedy from him—particularly perhaps from the Romances which are the final form that comedy took in his hands. Jonson alone stood apart, apparently unaffected. Shakespeare took suggestions from him as he took them from everywhere, but he utilized Jonson's hints more in the comic parts of the English History plays than in comedy itself. Nevertheless he seems to have approved of Jonson, and his company acted Jonson's most characteristic play, "Every Man in his Humour," in 1599, so probably giving Jonson a good start.

We saw in the chapter on "origins" that Lylly seems to have fixed the type of comedy suitable for Court presentation, and anyone can see how well adapted it is for such a purpose. He writes mostly in a graceful if artificial prose simpler than that employed in "Euphues." It became the recognized medium for comic scenes.

Needless criticism is sometimes levelled at Lylly's character-drawing. His persons bear the same relation to ordinary dramatic characters that silhouettes do to portraits. One must know for whom the silhouette is intended before the quality of the artist's interpretation

can be understood. Similarly with Llyl's persons. They represent people known to the audience for which they were written, and their value depends not on their creation of a living human character, but on the skill with which the salient qualities of a familiar person are represented gracefully in a limited medium. In these plays Elizabeth is always Cynthia ; Endymion in the play of the name is probably Leicester ; Tellus is Mary Stuart, and so on. Besides the prettiness of the whole story, the chief charm lies in the irradiation of the sordid intrigues of the Court by the sunny fancy of the poet, and the atmosphere of noble calm which the poet tries not unsuccessfully to suggest. The humour too has been rather unduly decried. Llyl's pages are as amusing as some of Shakespeare's clowns, and their obvious childishness would give a flavour to wit that comes heavily from a full-grown youth. The little Duke of York in "*Richard III*" was probably copied from Llyl's boys, but Shakespeare uses his pertness to deepen the pathos, or the pathos to give value to the childish smartness, "So wise so young, they say, do ne'er live long."

Again, there are many definite debts in the way of character outlines and of incidents that Shakespeare owed to Llyl. Sir Tophas in "*Endymion*" is the prototype first of Don Armado and then of Falstaff. This fact perhaps explains the traditional story of Elizabeth's foolish wish to see Falstaff in love. Sir Tophas is a fat bragging coward who falls ludicrously in love with an ugly hag Dipsas. No doubt Elizabeth wished Shakespeare's version of the episode. From the same play comes the incident of Falstaff's pinching by the fairies, though in this place it is Corsites, not Tophas, who stands for Falstaff. Epiton, Sir Tophas's page, was probably the hint for Falstaff's page. It is worth noting, however, that Falstaff's links with Llyl's personages are less obvious in the First Part of "*Henry*

IV," his first appearance, and are clearest in the play certainly intended for Court performance.

Lylly's plays are composed, as it were, in sections, and the personages fall into groups on different planes of existence. For example, in "Galathea" we have Galathea and Phillida with their respective fathers and some other persons who represent the human norm. Then we have the gods Neptune, Venus, Diana, and Cupid, with Diana's nymphs. Finally the Alchemist and the Mariner with the three boys, Raffe, Robin and Dick, provide the comic element. The gods interfere to a small extent with the human story, but have their own affairs quite apart. The comic characters have practically no connexion with the other two groups.

The same sort of classification of persons applies to the "Midsummer Night's Dream." We have the human norm in the two pairs of lovers and Hermia's father. Bottom and his crew correspond to the Mariner and the three boys, while Theseus and Hippolyta take the place of the more dignified gods, the Fairies and Puck of Venus, Cupid, and Diana's nymphs. But Shakespeare connects up his different plots with far greater skill and uses the different groups to suggest that many-sidedness of life which makes us feel that the marvellous may be merely the unfamiliar. When we stumble upon another plane we see what had before been hid.

Lylly had hoped in vain to be made the Master of the Revels, and there is some mystery about the disfavour with which Elizabeth seems to have regarded him towards the end. "The Woman in the Moon" looks like a satire by the embittered courtier. Elizabeth in the Court mythology was usually known as Cynthia, and when Pandora elects to dwell with Cynthia, who had made her "idle, mutable, forgetful, foolish, fickle, frantic, mad," one cannot imagine how he could expect to please the Queen. On the other hand, the Prologue

asserts that the play is a "dream, the first he had in Phœbus' holy bowre."

It is usual to regard Greene as an important forerunner of Shakespeare and moulding influence on him. He himself wrote furiously of "the upstart crow beautified with our feathers," and there can be little doubt that he refers to Shakespeare. His claim appears to be that the professional actors' illiterate dramatic improvisations had at last ceased to please, and that the University Wits, with Greene himself as an important member of that fraternity, were called in to give new life with their learning. It is a curious fact, however, that Greene in his extant plays does not "smell" much of "that writer Ovid" or of any other classic. On the contrary, his gift to comedy was a pleasant background of real English country life and portraits of noble, loving women of gentle nurture. These heroines Greene seems to have drawn from his own much enduring wife, a lady of higher social rank than Shakespeare, Marlowe, or Peele were likely to know intimately. Greene is indeed the only one of Shakespeare's predecessors who leaves the impression of having met a good woman. Margaret in "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay" is loving and loyal and quite without that quality which makes us feel that Bell-Imperia is modelled on a courtesan. It is only fair to add, however, that Munday's heroines, if not quite so attractive as Greene's, do manage to be at once alive and capable of love without being also sensual. It is possible that further study of Munday may diminish Greene's claim as Shakespeare's creditor. Owing to the mystery in which he is involved, Munday will here be dealt with in the same chapter as the Apocrypha. No critic can at present do more than advance plausible conjectures either about Munday or about these doubtful plays.

Peele is a writer difficult to realize. Tradition makes

of him a practical joker and clown. His plays show him singularly without a sense of humour, but endowed with a feeling for beauty and considerable creative power. His life probably coincided roughly with Elizabeth's reign. In 1584, about the time that Shakespeare left Stratford, his masque "The Arraignment of Paris" was published. It had been presented before the Queen by the Children of her Chappell. Nothing more of his is published till 1593, so that the date of their writing is quite uncertain. The early publication of a Court Masque ought to be compared with the early publication of "Love's Labour's Lost." The latest published is "The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe. With the Tragedie of Absalon." The subject suggests a connexion with the Miracle plays, but that influence was probably indirect. There is an attempt to give an Eastern atmosphere, especially in David's beautiful love speeches. Peele gets the dramatic value of David's anxious waiting for the news of Absalom's rebellion, and he spoils as little as may be the great lament for Absalom. The scene between David and Solomon too shows considerable power. Solomon is the contrast to Absalom—human beauty—and he might so easily have been a prig. In fact, his speeches and David's to him give a sense of uplift on the wings of holiness.

DAVID. Solomon, my love, is David's lord;
Our God hath named him lord of Israel:
In Him (for that, and since he is thy son)
Must David needs be pleased at the heart;
But Absalon, the beauty of my bones,
Fair Absalon, the counterfeit of love,
Sweet Absalon, the image of content,
Must claim a portion of his father's care
And be in life and death King David's son.

"The Battle of Alcazar with the Death of Captain Stukely" is the piece dear to Pistol. Stukely was a soldier of fortune, who was killed in Spain fighting

against the Moors, whilst on his way to try to win a kingdom for himself in Ireland with Papal help. The author is torn between satisfaction that an English commoner should have dealt on equal terms with Kings and Popes and dutiful horror at his treason.

From internal evidence "Edward I" must have been written soon after "Alcazar." Its chief purpose is the glorification of Edward as Conqueror, and that part is well written. But there is a secondary theme suggested clearly by hatred of Spain. Edward's Queen, Eleanor of Castile, is represented as a monster of cruelty and pride, and an absurd supernatural punishment is meted out to her.

Perhaps the most interesting of all Peele's works to a student is the "Old Wives' Tale." Three men lose their way at night in a wood and come to a poor cottage where they spend the night. There is only one bed, and the wife allows one of the guests her place in it while she sits up with the other two, and to entertain them begins to tell a story. She is very sleepy and the tale gets more and more confused, and then the characters in it become alive and enact their adventures while the old woman and the two men sit as spectators, as Andrea and Revenge do in "The Spanish Tragedy." Something of the same sort happens in Greene's "James IV," but Peele's play leaves more of an impression of artistic purpose. The "Wives' Tale" is a jumble of fairy folk tales of a beautiful King's daughter who is carried away by a dragon and sought by her two brothers; of two sisters, a beautiful and curst one, and a good but ugly one, who are sent to a magic well, and of many other marvels. At intervals "Harvestmen" enter and sing action songs, such as:

"Lo, here we come a-sowing, a-sowing."

The whole play looks like a conscious attempt to blend folk tale, drama like Lyly's, and the sports of

festivals together in the cloudy fabric of a dream. It will be observed that the scenes in the poor cottage in the forest form an Induction, the best of its kind in Elizabethan drama. The art of it should be compared with that of the "Midsummer Night's Dream." There we start in the august region of Theseus' court, and after being introduced to the fairy world come plump on Bottom and his companions. But in Peele's work, as later in Beaumont and Fletcher's imitation of it, "The Knight of the Burning Pestle," the simple folk who are very much alive are kept outside the Dream framework. If Peele had lived he might perhaps have developed side by side with Shakespeare a drama of a different kind.

Christopher Marlowe was born the same year as Shakespeare and killed in a brawl in 1593. It is generally assumed, though there is no proof, that it was he who influenced Shakespeare, and not vice versa. His great bequest was the use of blank verse in drama. He turned with conscious contempt "from jigging veins of rhyming mother wits," and produced the great and thundering speech of Tamburlaine. Marlowe's tragic formula is very simple and very close to the mediæval one—"a tale of them that have been in great prosperity and are afterwards fallen into misery."

The Mediæval world fixed its eyes on the turning of Fortune's Wheel and saw all men almost undistinguished except by place. Marlowe's theme is the infinite spirit of man. "Heaven," Mephistopheles tells Faustus, "is not half so fair as thou or any man that breathes on earth." He anticipates Nietzsche's Superman in almost every particular. In the Prologue to "The Jew of Malta" he attributes this ethic to Machiavelli, and some phrases might be echoes of Zarathustra, "Of the poor petty wights let me be envied and not pitied."

“ I hold religion but a childish toy
And hold there is no sin but ignorance . . .
Might first made kings, and laws were then most sure
When like the Draco’s they were writ in blood.”

It is his creation of this type of hero that forms the second link between Marlowe and Shakespeare. “Richard III” is an experiment in the villain hero, and the play has the same sort of appeal as “Tamburlaine” or “the Jew.” But to Shakespeare such a man is a pathological case, to be explained by Richard’s physical deformity, which cuts him off from his brother men. That such a monster of cruelty as Tamburlaine should be beautiful to look on and of natural and normal growth seemed to the greater poet impossible. Marlowe describes his Shepherd Conqueror as “lift upward and divine”; Shakespeare his villain of genius

“ curtail’d of this fair proportion
Cheated of Feature by dissembling nature
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing World, scarce half made up
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogges bark at me, as I halt by them.”

It is sometimes assumed that the traces of classical form in the play are also due to Marlowe’s influence. These are, for example, the many passages of stichomythia, i.e. dialogue in which each person speaks a single line, the second very often a sort of pun on the first. There is, too, a suggestion of a classical chorus in the scene where Richard’s victims bewail their griefs. But to attribute this to Marlowe’s influence is pure conjecture—he does not himself employ either form clearly.

The relation between the plays of “Edward II” and “Richard II” is much more important, for “Richard II” is an early example of what became Shakespeare’s characteristic manner, while “Richard III” is an isolated example of a type he rejected. It is a less

perfect play of its kind than "Richard III." Its unity is not quite clear; there are some shadowy figures, e.g. Aumerle; and some rather weak scenes (the talk of the gardeners and York's accusation of his son to Bolingbroke). But the subtle characterization of Richard shows that Shakespeare has found himself. He even foreshadows Hamlet. Must we then say that Shakespeare was Marlowe's pupil? I think not except in the matter of blank verse. I have suggested below how "Edward II" grew naturally out of Marlowe's method of conceiving a central character in the possession of good—in this case luxury—which in the catastrophe he loses absolutely and for ever. But luxury was not a suitable *motif* for this type of play, and in fact there is considerable confusion in consequence. Mortimer is developed to act as foil to Edward, and Marlowe falls in love with him and puts into his mouth that acceptance of the adventure of death which we look for in vain from Tamburlaine—"Weep not for Mortimer, who as a traveller goes to discover countries yet unknown."

Again, it has been overlooked that the author intends us to sympathize with Edward's "passioning" at his abdication just as we perforce sympathize with him in his death scene. Shakespeare's feeling about the abdication seems to be very much that of a modern. He saw the tawdry sentimentality of it, though with the death scene coming he felt a real pathos in the situation. And he borrowed the external form of the scene because he wished to present Richard as a sentimentalist, always posing, always seeing with the eye of the artist the emotional possibilities of a situation and never really feeling the emotion he knew to be appropriate. He borrows a good deal, and what he adds emphasizes his view. He introduces Bolingbroke, and in this scene rather inconsistently makes him the "strong silent man" to form a contrast to the babbling

Richard. He gives the mirror episode with its silly symbolism. Marlowe means us to feel pure tragic emotion at the speech of Edward with its queer natural history :

“ The grieves of private men are soon allayed
 But not of kings. The forest deer being struck
 Runs to an herb that closeth up the wounds ;
 But, when the imperial lion’s flesh is gored
 He rends and tears it with his wrathful paw.”

Shakespeare gives Richard “ abundance of gleaming words,” but he never means us to take them quite seriously. He allows even Richard’s devoted train to smile at his similar speech :

“ Feed not thy sovereign’s foe, my gentle earth,
 . . . Yield stinging nettles to mine Enemies ;
 And when they from thy bosom pluck a flower
 Guard it, I prithee, with a lurking adder,
 . . . Mock not my senseless conjuration, lords.”

A similar contrast comes out lower down in the famous speech where Richard calls on his followers :

“ For God’s sake let us sit upon the ground
 And tell sad stories of the death of Kings,” etc.

It seems to have been suggested by the scene in which Edward with two attendants is hiding in an Abbey. He believes that he may rest in safety and calls Spencer and Baldock to sit down by him and

“ make trial now of that philosophy
 That in our famous nurseries of art
 Thou suck’st from Plato and from Aristotle.
 Father, this life contemplative is Heaven.
 O, that I might this life in quiet lead.”

The men of the Renaissance were like captives who had been kept in dark dungeons and are suddenly returned to all the loveliness and luxury of the world. Of this spirit Marlowe is the English representative. He asserts the almost infinite value of human and

earthly goods, one being the special *subject* of each play. — In "Tamburlaine" it is royal power :

"A god is not so glorious as a King
 I think the pleasure they enjoy in Heaven
 Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth—
 To wear a crown engraved with pearl and gold,
 Whose virtues carry with it life and death ;
 To ask and have, command and be obeyed
 . . . and ride in triumph through Persepolis."

In the "Jew of Malta" it is wealth—"infinite riches in a little room" :

"Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,
 Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,
 Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds,
 And seld-seen costly stones of so great price
 As one of them indifferently rated
 . . . May serve in peril of calamity
 To ransom great kings from captivity."

"Edward II" is sometimes said to be on different lines, but the difference is mainly accidental. Edward, like the other heroes of Marlowe, has an idol—his favourite Gaveston and the sensuous pleasures for which he stands. Gaveston tells us the secret of his power :

"I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,
 Musicians, that with touching of a string
 May draw the pliant king which way I please.
 Music and poetry is his delight ;
 Therefore I'll have Italian masks by night,
 . . . And in the day when he shall walk abroad,
 Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad,
 My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawns
 Shall with their goat feet dance the antic hay.
 Sometimes a lovely boy in Dian's shape
 . . . Shall bathe him in a spring ; and there hard by
 One like Actaeon peeping through the grove
 Shall by the angry goddess be transformed
 And running in the likeness of an hart
 By yelping hounds pulled down, shall seem to die :
 Such things as these best please his majesty."

As in the other plays the climax of a catastrophe serves as a foil to the treasure celebrated. The *motif* of the terrible scene in the dungeon is given in Edward's words, "Tell Isabel the Queen I looked not thus when for her sake I ran atilt in France."

In conception the greatest of Marlowe's plays is "Faustus," generally placed immediately after "Tamburlaine" in order of composition. Faustus' idol is knowledge, creative power, experience. Marlowe's work presents many problems, which have never even been adequately stated, but Faustus is the most tantalizing of all. More than a suspicion of unorthodoxy hung over Marlowe, and all we know of him would lead us to expect him to sympathize with his hero in his struggle to force the barriers of mortal limitations. Faustus has mastered all the science of his time and is still athirst for more knowledge and power. Magic is the key to this, and he sells his soul to Lucifer for the services of Mephistopheles :

" Seeing Faustus hath incurred eternal death
 By desperate thoughts against Jove's deity
 Say he surrenders up to him his soul,
 So he will spare him four-and-twenty years . . .
 Having thee ever to attend on me ;
 To give me whatsoever I shall ask,
 To tell me whatsoever I demand."

Faustus has a freedom of soul, too, in the early part of the play with which we sympathize : " This word damnation terrifies not him." But in the end Faustus is damned, and we do not feel, as we do, for example, with Tamburlaine, that the Ruling Power has played with weighted dice. The last scene is an immensely powerful presentation of the awful doctrine of Mediæval Christianity :

" Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
 And then thou must be damned perpetually !
 Stand still, you ever moving spheres of Heaven,
 That time may cease, and midnight never come ;

. . . Or let this hour be but
 A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
 That Faustus may repent and save his soul !
O lente, lente, currite noctis equi !
 . . . Ah, half the hour is past ! 'twill all be past anon !
 O God !
 If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
 . . . Impose some end to my incessant pain ;
 Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years—
 A hundred thousand, and—at last—be saved.”

The chorus points the moral that “ the wise should ” only “ wonder at unlawful things, Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits To practice more than heavenly power permits.” What did Marlowe mean by it ? He shows extraordinary spirituality in the earlier scenes in his view of Hell and by implication of Heaven. Faustus expresses surprise that Mephistopheles can leave Hell. He replies :

“ Why, this is Hell, nor am I out of it,
 Think’st thou that I who saw the face of God
 . . . Am not tormented with ten thousand Hells
 In being deprived of everlasting bliss ? ”

Further, we find traces of contemporaries shrinking from pushing the doctrine to its logical limits. One example raises several questions in connexion with Marlowe.

A certain “ minister of Norwich ” in 1581 produced a Morality called “ The Conflict of Conscience,” which he averred was founded on a true story, the names of the people being concealed behind abstractions. Now this Morality corresponds very closely to “ Faustus,” but the hero Philologus is a Protestant preacher who in the reign of Mary renounces his faith for the sake of worldly wealth and advancement. The scenes in which good and bad personages strive for his soul correspond closely to the similar scenes in “ Faustus,” and his final despairing monologue when he is at the

point of death is like a paraphrase of Faustus' speech quoted above by some one without the poetic sense. The speech ends the play proper, but a "Nuntio" appears and explains shortly that at the last moment Philologus found repentance. Now the "minister of Norwich" certainly wrote before Marlowe, and it is almost certain that Marlowe must have read his play or something founded on it. Did he alter the end for purely artistic reasons?

Perhaps the best way to realize the idiosyncrasies of Marlowe, Peele, and Greene is to consider their claims to the Apocryphal Shakespeare play of "Edward III." It has been attributed to all four men, and it is quite possible that all four did contribute to it.

The play falls into two parts. The first deals with Edward's attempt to seduce the Countess of Salisbury and his reclamation owing to her courageous refusal. The second part displays Edward as a successful general, granting mercy to Calais at his consort's request, refusing to send succour to the Prince of Wales, while vowing terrific vengeance if he falls, and generally acting the part of a pageant King. Some critics consider that he is a completely different character in the two parts and that they must therefore be by different authors. Some of the scenes in the first part with the Countess of Salisbury bear considerable resemblance to similar scenes in Greene's "James IV." Moreover, Marlowe and Peele nowhere else show any power at all of drawing women. This part then is generally assigned to either Greene or Shakespeare, or supposed to be a revision by one of these of Peele's or Marlowe's work. The second part, on the other hand, is quite unlike anything we possess of Greene's. The character of the King and the complete absorption in military and political affairs is suggestive of Peele, while short passages and single lines are sometimes reminiscent of Marlowe and sometimes of the youthful Shakespeare. For example, the following

description of the French battle lines must be either by Marlowe or by an imitator of Marlowe :

“ Philip the younger issue of the King
Coting the other hill in such arraie
That all his gilded upright pikes do seeme
Straight trees of gold, the pendants leaves
And their device of Antique heraldry
Quartered in collours, seeming sundry fruits
Makes it the orchard of the Hesperides.”

Again, Audley’s words of encouragement of the young Prince are in both thought and expression like Shakespeare in his youth :

“ To die is all as common as to live :
The one inch-wise, the other holds in chase ;
For from the instant we begin to live,
We do pursue and hunt the time to die ;
First bud we, then we blow, and after seed
Then presently we fall.”

Some writers have thought that the Countess is like Shakespeare’s women, while others have fiercely denied it.

Now it is likely enough that the play was originally two : more probable that it formed part of such a series of plays as will be described in the chapter on the Apocrypha. It is quite likely that the work of different men could be included in such a series ; but the present writer is of opinion that Shakespeare—whether he had any part in the original play or not—revised it and brought it into its present shape, and in so revising it his imagination was stimulated chiefly by Peele’s “ David and Betsabe.”

Both plays deal with men of middle age, who are drawn at a period when their passions are in conflict with their duty to Heaven and to the nation over which they rule. In both cases the husband of the woman they tempt is absent fighting the King’s battles. In both plays stress is laid on the relation between the

hero and his divinely appointed heir—David's to Solomon, Edward's to the Black Prince. The feeling is not that of ordinary fatherhood, which in Peele's hero is displayed by his deep devotion to Absalom. In both the hero is saved from abandoning himself for the rest of his life to slothful indulgence of his passions by the intervention of an external force, and the result in each case is that the hero abandons the hope of private happiness and gives himself up to fulfilling the duties of his office. In doing so, Edward III becomes a rather harsh and unhuman if perfectly just ruler. Now this view of what is the necessary character of a successful English King tallies perfectly with the view taken in "*Richard II*" and the two parts of "*Henry IV*." The heartless rejection of Falstaff by the newly crowned Henry V is merely the most striking expression of Shakespeare's opinion.

Revision, therefore, by Shakespeare seems probable. But, if the pageant-like quality of the second part was there when Shakespeare took the play in hand, it may very well have been by Marlowe. Tamburlaine is really a pageant play. It is the sort of thing that a moving group of people could very well enact. The splendour of its setting is a splendour of armour and waving banners and rolling chariots. Edward III reads like the stationary version of something that had once been enacted by people in procession stopping now and again. Greene's claim must be confined to the first part, and some critics have held that the resemblance of the temptation scenes to the similar scenes in "*James IV*" is too great for the same man to have written them. It should be remembered, however, that early Elizabethan dramatists regarded themselves far more as craftsmen than as artists. Just as a workman at the present day colouring a print would make them all as nearly alike as possible, so an Elizabethan dramatist, if called on for a seduction scene, would make it as good as he could,

and not trouble to think whether he had done it before. This sort of attitude was almost certainly that of Shakespeare, Greene, Peele, Munday, and many other nameless men, and should always be borne in mind in dealing with questions of authorship of early plays. This caution does not apply to Llyl, who wrote almost entirely for one audience and, like his successor Ben Jonson, must have been obliged to be fresh at all costs. It is difficult to be sure how far Marlowe felt bound to be original. On the whole his imitation of himself looks like the involuntary repetition of a strongly marked artistic character.

CHAPTER V

THE REVENGE PLAY

APART from Marlowe it is probable that Tragedy before 1600 is all closely linked with the idea of Revenge for the family honour, and that the Elizabethans recognized its descent through Seneca from Greek tragic themes.

Orestes is the most ubiquitous figure in Greek drama, but the Œdipus of Sophocles was almost more important to the development of Senecan drama. It had been foretold of Œdipus that he should slay his father, who was King of Thebes, and marry with his mother. Therefore when the child was born he was given to a shepherd to expose on the mountain. But the shepherd gave the infant to the shepherd of the childless King of Corinth, and he was brought up as heir to the throne of Corinth, but the repetition of the oracle when he had grown to manhood and believed himself the true son of the King of Corinth, drove him from the country. In his wandering he met and slew his unknown father, and then came to Thebes, which the Sphinx at that time ravaged. But Œdipus solved the riddle that the monster propounded to all who came to her, and so delivered the country of her, and the people, revering him almost as a god, begged him to take the empty throne and marry the widowed queen. The play deals with the revelation to the unhappy man that he, who had thought himself almost a god, had indeed fulfilled the terrible destiny foretold, and that in his person every human relationship is defaced, so

that the sight of him will quite literally pollute the sunshine. Sophocles has another play on *Œdipus*, written much later, written, one supposes, to underline his meaning. *Œdipus*, a wanderer like Cain, is about to die, but his body, with its strange taboo, will be a valuable possession to the state that possesses his grave. The play deals with the struggle and ends with *Œdipus*'s strange passing, called by a supernatural voice and unseen of any. It is like the story of the translation of Elijah. The element of *Œdipus*'s story that seems to have affected the Senecan tradition is the association of a supernatural quality with the perpetuation of great and unnatural crimes.

The combination of these two heroes, Orestes and *Œdipus*, in various degrees accounts for the typical hero of Seneca. He deals with the traditional stories in all but one play, "Octavia," but "*Œdipus*" was perhaps the most important. Seneca follows Sophocles very closely in the dramatic part. There is only one new passage, namely, the description of the prophet's invocation of the dead Laius to explain the oracle. It takes place in a valley dark with trees, and the incantations rend the earth, so that Creon, who describes the scene, can see the underworld and the tormented shades. Many phantoms appear, and last Laius himself.

A scene of this sort appears in most of Seneca's plays, and undoubtedly influenced early Elizabethan drama. It combined with the ghost of Thyestes in Seneca's "*Agamemnon*," and the ghost of Tantalus and Megæra in the "*Thyestes*" to suggest the ghosts of the Revenge plays. Tantalus and Megæra are directly imitated by Kyd in the "*Spanish Tragedy*" in *Andrea* and the figure of *Revenge*. The rest of the action in both plays is supposed to be incited by the ghostly spectators. Space is lacking to show the various elements by which the ghost in "*Hamlet*"

was suggested, but it is clearly traceable also to Seneca.

But more important than these suggestions for episodes and form is the Senecan influence on the tragic hero and the ethical thought implied in the drama.

There are two heroes of importance to our subject in Senecan drama—Hercules and Atreus. The importance of Hercules—the hero of two of the plays—is that he was frankly half divine, half human. Juno, who hates him, bids him “ seek himself a throne in Heaven and scorn his human lot.” Unable to subdue him in any other way, she finally sends madness upon him and in his frenzy he slays his children. The tradition of a tragic hero who aspires to divinity is therefore clear in Hercules, and also the further tradition that this aspiration involves him not only in terrible mental anguish but also in guilt.

This latter point is made clearest in *Œdipus*, who is simply a coarser version of the *Œdipus* of Sophocles. It may be noticed in parenthesis that the scene in which Antigone leading her blind father describes to him a view of the sea from a lofty cliff probably suggested Edgar’s description to Gloucester of the scene from Dover Cliff. But the importance of *Œdipus* is his claim to almost superhuman power; his pollution by terrible but unintentional sin and his final supernatural passing.

Atreus is the hero of the “Thyestes,” perhaps for English drama the most important of all, and yet the character in which Seneca shows at his worst. Atreus has been wronged by his brother Thyestes, who has sought to deprive him of both wife and kingdom. Atreus comes on to the stage with a slave, to whom he expresses himself as freely as in soliloquy. He is ashamed that he has not shown his royal nature yet by a terrible vengeance.

“ O slothful, indolent, weak, unavenged
 This last I deem for tyrants greatest wrong.
 . . . Dost thou, O angry Atreus, waste the time
 In idle lamentations ?
 . . . Up ! do a deed which none shall e'er approve
 But one whose fame none shall e'er cease to speak.”

Later on he has worked himself into a passion of fury, and in this state, which he regards as inspired, has conceived a diabolical vengeance.

“ I know not what great passion in my heart
 Wilder than I have known, beyond the bounds
 Of human nature, rises, urges on
 My slothful hands.”

And

“ This evil shall be done
 Which gods ye fear.”

His plan is to decoy his brother’s children to him, kill them and serve them as food at a pretended reconciliation feast to their miserable father. This disgusting story is used both in “ *Titus Andronicus* ” and in one of Marston’s plays, probably in many more.

The importance of Atreus is his identification of virtue with the doing of appalling deeds in defence of personal honour, and his fear that he himself is not sufficiently noble to feel the proper resentment. His attitude in this last respect should be compared with the soliloquy of Hamlet after the player’s passion :

“ O what a rogue and pleasant slave am I !
 . . . it cannot be,
 But I am pigeon-liver’d, and lack gall
 To make oppression bitter, or ere this
 I should have fatted all the region kyties
 With this slave’s offal.”

Compare also Hieronimo’s shame when the poor man comes demanding vengeance for his son’s death.

Orestes scarcely appears in Senecan drama, but the tradition of his vengeance for his father's death on his mother and her paramour, the latter a relative of the murdered man, together with the madness which results from his horror of the matricide, forms a plot with many points of likeness to "Hamlet."

We get then the conception of a tragic hero who claims equality with the gods and who finds his defiance of Heaven best proved by terrible crimes, generally in vengeance for some wrong done to himself. This idea in Marlowe's case seems to have been slightly modified by Machiavelli's doctrines. Shakespeare is at once inspired and revolted by it. Kyd introduced a very interesting element destined in his great successor to be the seed both of Hamlet and of Lear.

The source of the plot of the "Spanish Tragedy" is unknown. The present writer believes that Kyd invented it, placing the scene in Spain because the stress laid on the idea of honour suited the Spanish character. The play is apt to appear disjointed to the uninitiated reader. A certain Andrea, a noble Spaniard, has been killed in fair fight by Balthazar, Prince of Portugal, during a war between the two countries. His ghost and the figure of Revenge sit at the side of the stage throughout the play, Revenge assuring Andrea that his desire for vengeance will be sated. The victorious Spanish army returns home bringing Balthazar as prisoner, and Horatio, son of the Marshal of Spain, to whom the victory is chiefly due, desires to put his prisoner to death in vengeance for his dear friend Andrea. In this he is supported by the Princess Bel-Imperia, niece of the King, who was secretly betrothed to Andrea, but opposed by Lorenzo, her brother. A full third of the play is taken up with this discussion, which is made a little absurd by the fact that Bel-Imperia has at once fallen in love with Horatio. They meet at night

in the garden of Horatio's father, but are betrayed to Lorenzo and Balthazar (now released and a suitor for Bel-Imperia's hand), who come with servants, hang Horatio in the arbour and carry off the lady. Her outcries call out old Hieronimo, and his frantic grief formed the most famous scene in pre-Shakespearean tragedy. The rest of the play is devoted to the question of Hieronimo's vengeance for his son's death. He hesitates long, although he has no real doubt of the murderer, and although Bel-Imperia tells him plainly and offers help. Eventually they agree in a plot. She consents to marriage with Balthazar, and Hieronimo is to arrange a play in honour of the occasion, in which all the personages concerned are to act. The play is a tragedy, and every one is killed except Hieronimo himself, who remains alive to explain his motive, which, however, on demand, he refuses to do, bites out his tongue, and then kills himself.

The play is crudely melodramatic and Bel-Imperia on the whole badly drawn, though the touch by which she accuses herself to her brother in the vain hope of saving her lover's life shows dramatic genius. "I loved Horatio, but he loved not me." The mother Isabella, who also goes mad with grief and comes in with herbs that cannot cure her heartache, gave hints for Ophelia.

But it is on the delineation of Hieronimo himself that the play and Kyd's fame depends. Why does he delay to take vengeance? The answer, I believe, is that, being very old, he lacks the virile courage and fears death. In a speech prefiguring the great soliloquy of Hamlet he tries to make himself face it as not so dreadful as his present life. Kyd seems to assume the view of Atreus that not to take vengeance is the mark of a base and cowardly nature, while at the same time recognizing the largely physical element in courage. Hieronimo, who in spite of his extreme age and infirmity does in the

end achieve a perfect holocaust, proves the independent and tremendous power of man's spirit.

It was this idea that he bequeathed to Shakespeare —the idea that it was the business of tragedy to portray the greatness of man's soul at strife with and ultimately conquering bodily limitations. There are traces in the First Quarto of "*Hamlet*" that the earliest version of that play (by Kyd or by Shakespeare is really unimportant) made Hamlet very young, almost a boy, and that the interest lay in this mere child's success in bracing his own spirit and overcoming all the material forces arrayed against him.

However that may be, we have in Marston's "*Antonio's Revenge*" a play on these lines, written probably about 1598. It is the second part of "*Antonio and Mellida*," and though of little value to pure literature is almost inestimable to the student of drama. It suggests: (1) that the Revenge play (including Shakespeare's "*Titus*," "*Hamlet*," "*Julius Cæsar*," "*Macbeth*," "*Coriolanus*," "*Timon*") was apt to be represented in set scenes; (2) it shows that certain typical characters and certain rather complex emotions had become a normal element in such plays.

Many years before the first play opens, Andrugio, the father of Antonio, and the villain Piero had contested the hand of Maria, and Andrugio became her husband. In consequence Piero becomes his enemy, and early in the first part Andrugio's fortunes appear desperate. An apparent reconciliation, however, is effected, and Antonio and Mellida, Piero's daughter, are betrothed. The peace is celebrated at a banquet.

The second part opens after midnight following this banquet. Piero comes on to the stage with a bloody dagger and tells us that he poisoned Andrugio at the banquet and has slain a certain Feliche, apparently merely to use him as a means for blackening his daughter's fame. As morning dawns, on one pretext or

another, all the chief personages assemble, including as the only woman Maria, who has just arrived. Piero's accomplice enters to these people and announces with pretended horror the death of Andrugio. Maria faints and is carried out, while Piero "gives seeming passion." A comparison of these scenes with those of the night of Duncan's murder in "Macbeth" and of the discovery the following morning will prove that representation in dumb show of one pair would be indistinguishable from that of the other. Later in the play we have scenes similarly indistinguishable from "Hamlet" scenes, e.g. Andrugio's ghost appears in Maria's bedchamber to Maria and her son. The ghost has bidden Antonio seek vengeance, but he is hampered both by overwhelming material difficulties and by his extreme youth and the paralysis of power brought about by the doubts which Piero has cast on the chastity of his bride Mellida. He is represented as being very sensitive and emotional—not to say sentimental. Eventually the vengeance is accomplished, all the persons whom Piero has wronged being united under Antonio's leadership. Maria is instructed to agree to the marriage which Piero is urging, and Antonio's party are to provide a masque at the festivities (this part of the play shows links with the "Spanish Tragedy"). The avengers by this device get Piero alone with themselves and give him to eat of the body of his little son (previously slain by Antonio). The ghost of Andrugio enters to watch the vengeance, which is of the crudest horror. "The conspirators bind Piero, pluck out his tongue, and triumph over him," afterwards they all stab him. The scene ends with the ghost's commendation :

"'Tis done, and now my soul shall sleep in rest
Sons that revenge their father's blood are blest."

It is noticeable, however, that the avengers, and particularly Antonio, though offered high office in the state,

all decide to retire to some religious order, there to "meditate on misery."

Marston's connexion with Shakespeare is a mystery, and one perhaps better worth solving than most. He was of good position, educated at Oxford, and destined by his father for the Law. He *may* be Ovid in Jonson's "Poetaster." He wrote plays apparently surreptitiously and seems to have been a great admirer of the dramatist. There is a tradition that "Titus Andronicus" was not by Shakespeare, but by an unknown author, who brought it to Shakespeare and got him to induce his company to take it. Much in "Titus" suggests Marston, for example the very close imitation of Senecan horrors. Marston also wrote very foul-mouthed satire over the pseudonym "Kinsayder" and an unpleasant imitation—he afterwards claimed that it was a parody—of "Venus and Adonis" called "Pygmalion and Galathea." He wrote several plays, of which the best perhaps is "The Malcontent." The attitude of the hero is very like that of Jaques, but his sorrows are part of the play and he is satisfied in the end.

Marston finally, about 1600, abandoned dramatic writing and entered the Church. The text of his works is perhaps the most confused on record. They were printed under the supervision of a friend during his absence from the country, and the nonsense which appears on almost every page is the best argument for the diligence of Shakespeare's editors.

Chapman also followed the fashion of Revenge plays, but his was a solitary mind, and while he reflects the ideas of his time he does not appear to have affected others. He is therefore best considered by himself.

Thomas Heywood should also be mentioned here. A large number of plays of very diverse kinds appear under his name, but the most famous is "A Woman

killed with Kindness." It is a domestic tragedy, the scene being laid in the household of a country squire of good position. The wife, for no very apparent reason, commits adultery. The wronged husband when he discovers the crime is at first tempted to kill the lovers, but desists. He tells the man, who is under great obligations to him :

" When thou record'st my many courtesies
And shalt compare them with thy treacherous heart
'Twill be revenge enough."

His wife he sentences merely to banishment from himself and her children, but to live in comfort and even luxury at one of his manors. She dies of grief for her sin.

The sub-plot makes the author's point clearer. Sir Charles Mountford has come into the power of his enemy Sir Francis Acton and is in misery in prison. Sir Francis desires, partly for revenge and partly because of his passion for her, to make Mountford's sister his mistress, and therefore unknown to the Mountfords pays all the debts. When Mountford discovers this, his conception of honour forbids him to live under obligation to Acton, and having nothing left he persuades his sister to yield herself, both determining not to survive her stain. In the end Acton is so overcome that he receives Susan as his honourable bride and divides his possessions with her brother. Heywood is clearly emphasizing the uselessness and wrong of material vengeance.

Chettle's "Tragedy of Hoffmann" also belongs to this group. It was probably written about 1603, and the author would have "Hamlet" before him. Very different views of its value have been taken by critics. On the whole what merit it has seems to be rather the technical skill of the time of composition, its faults are its own. Its chief links with the type are : (1) that it is

concerned with Hoffmann's schemes of vengeance for his father's death, and (2) that there is a girl corresponding very closely to Ophelia.

Hoffmann is not the hesitating avenger. He sets out with the intention of killing eight people and succeeds in murdering five. He is finally undone because he falls in love with a woman, when his only safety lay in her death. How this has happened will be seen by reference to the Senecan and Greek sources. *Ægisthus*, who assists in the murder of Agamemnon, is the son of Thyestes, while Agamemnon himself is the son of Atreus. The death of Agamemnon, therefore, is itself vengeance for the older wrong done to Thyestes. As a result there seem to have developed two avenger types—an older and a younger—of which the older is modelled on Atreus or *Ægisthus* and the younger on Orestes. Hoffmann belongs to the older type, for he does not hesitate, and contemplates forcing the Duchess.

Tourneur completes the revolution of the wheel of thought. His "*Atheist's Tragedy, or the Honest Man's Revenge*," is a crude enough melodrama, but he takes his stand on that doctrine of leaving vengeance to Heaven, which Hieronimo had tacitly rejected. There are many of the usual situations of the Revenge play, including the appearance of the ghost of a murdered man to his son. His object, however, is merely to give information apparently. He expressly forbids vengeance.

"Return to France, for thy old Father's dead
And thou by murder disinherited.
Attend with patience the success of things,
But leave revenge unto the King of Kings."

The hero Charlemont obeys, and the Atheist, who is his uncle, gets him tried and condemned for the murder of a man he had killed in self-defence. Then, in order apparently to have the satisfaction of killing him himself, he

claims the office of executioner and as he raises the axe knocks out his own brains. The Atheist asks :

“ What murderer was he that lifted up
My hand against my head ? ”

1ST JUDGE. “ None but yourself, my lord.”

D'AMBVILLE (the Atheist). “ I thought he was a murderer that
did it.”

1ST JUDGE. “ God forbid.”

D'AMBVILLE. “ Forbid, you lie, Judge. He commanded it.”

He goes on to confess his crimes, and the innocent Charlemont is released. Charlemont speaks :

“ Only to Heaven I attribute the work
Whose gracious motives made me still forbear
To be mine own revenger. Now I see
That patience is the honest man's revenge.”

SHAKESPEARE'S TREATMENT OF THE REVENGE PLAY

“ Hamlet ” is the only play of Shakespeare which belongs obviously to the group we are considering, and it may be thought that it is not worth while to pursue the argument with regard to the others. But the matter is important for two reasons : (1) it lays bare Shakespeare's methods of work ; (2) by showing the relation we can trace Shakespeare's attitude to the moral standards of the time.

We shall take “ Hamlet ” first, because in it the type is manifest. There are three versions extant : (1) that of 1603, known as the First Quarto (2) that of 1604, known as the Second Quarto ; (3) and that of the collected edition—the Folio. They vary considerably, and it is admitted by all that the First Quarto is a pirated play. In some places, e.g. some lines of the “ To be or not to be ” speech, no sense at all can be made. The arrangement of the lines is faulty and shows no metrical sense. It is very much shorter than the other versions. That there

was a still earlier version of the play by Shakespeare or Kyd or another is practically certain, but we do not know how far the First Quarto represents this older play. It has been recently suggested that the pirate's chief agent, who was almost certainly the actor of certain minor parts, had obtained possession of a version of the play shortened for performance in the provinces, and that he eked this out with the written copies of his own parts in the fully developed play. Some of the most confused passages bear a strong resemblance to the "Spanish Tragedy." This may mean that the oldest version of the play was nearer the "Spanish Tragedy" than ours, or it may mean that the very incompetent pirate patched the holes in his copy with something that struck him as a fairly good match.

The Second Quarto is a very good example of Elizabethan printing. It is possible that Shakespeare saw it through the press. He almost certainly approved of its publication and presumably furnished the MS., and thus it is probable that the copy was revised with a reader, not the stage, in view. It omits one long soliloquy and it adds many short passages.

In the first version Hamlet is apparently quite young. His mother in the bedchamber scene explicitly denies knowledge of her husband's murder and from that time is a supporter of Hamlet. Horatio hears of Hamlet's escape at sea and confides it to her. The Hamlet of this version then is not unlike Marston's Antonio, except that Ophelia's relation to him is much less important than Mellida's is to Antonio. The pathos, which Kyd had obtained from the madness of Isabella, Horatio's mother, Shakespeare gets in a higher degree from that of Ophelia, who turns all "to prettiness."

We noticed that the "Spanish Tragedy" exhibited a certain lack of unity in the plot. It is important to remember that Shakespeare's plot had originally the

same weakness. A murder is committed before the play opens, and until the middle of the third act Hamlet is seeking vengeance for that murder, and, as he is nearly always on the stage, our attention is directed to the subject. Then, in the third act, Hamlet kills Polonius, and from that time we have a second avenger, Laertes. It is in some ways intrinsically a worse plot than Kyd's, for, though the avengers in his play are changed, the villain is the same, so that our sympathies are not confused. But in the "Hamlet" plot the avenger of the first half of the play has become the villain of the second part, and the complication of Ophelia's madness and death runs the risk of transferring the sympathy of the audience from Hamlet to Laertes. And yet, I suppose, no audience or reader ever felt the slightest inclination so to transfer his sympathy. How is it done? Perhaps the poisoning of the foils and Laertes's connivance at it was introduced for this among other reasons—it is not needed for the plot, but it is chiefly due to the skill with which Laertes's superficiality is suggested. He had to be introduced into the first part—it is probable that he did not appear at all in the first part of the original play, for his audience with the King could be cut out from the text without its being noticed, and so could his conversation with Ophelia. And Shakespeare seizes the opportunity to suggest that Laertes is something of a time-server and that in Hamlet's place he would have considered himself at liberty to take advantage of his position to make dishonourable love to the young girl. Later he sees in the misfortunes of his family an opportunity for self-advancement. His "bravery" at Ophelia's grave Shakespeare hints is his idea of the proper emotional expression for the occasion, not hypocritical because he is himself quite as much impressed as are the spectators.

This aspect of Laertes serves also to bring out Shakespeare's rendering of the hesitating Avenger. In his

early plays Shakespeare is apt to place several characters in opposition to the hero, in order that by the various contrasts certain shades of his temperament may become visible. Thus Romeo is contrasted with Tybalt, with Mercutio, with Paris, and Valentine not merely with Proteus but with Sylvia's other lovers. But the method is most important in "Hamlet," where Laertes is the chief foil, but Fortinbras, Horatio, and Rosen-crantz and Guildenstern have all their uses. Fortinbras is like Hotspur in "Henry IV," the man to whom the point of honour is really all the world, who will himself die gladly and send thousands of others to death with a quiet conscience "even for an egg-shell." Laertes does not quite feel this. He wishes his griefs paid for "Till our scale turn the beam," and it is significant that the first we hear of him after his father's death he has so dealt with the rabble that they are crying "Laertes shall be King." That vengeance for his father will bring himself profit is a distinct advantage in his eyes.

There is no time here to discuss the problem of the reason for Hamlet's delay, but the treatment of Amintor in "The Maid's Tragedy," Beaumont and Fletcher's play discussed later on, makes it quite clear that contemporary critics understood it as a proof of *fineness* of nature. Further, we find ample proof that disgust at the corruption surrounding him and melancholy as a result was by 1600 a pose so well understood as to be the subject of satire. The alterations in the Folio version of the play emphasize the spiritual basis of life, "There's nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so," and in the omission of the soliloquy caused by Fortinbras's adventure, the soliloquy which praises "greatly to find quarrel in a straw," we see that the dramatist and his audience alike had wandered far away from the Senecan conception.

"Othello," as I said above, is linked with the Revenge

play in that it is a magnificent elaboration of one element in the young Avenger's melancholy. On the other hand, it is important as the first of the later "tragedies of passion" and as the only example in Shakespeare of a domestic tragedy. Othello, that is, is not a prince, and the fate of no kingdom is involved in his fall. The subject of the play became the most frequent theme of post-Shakespearean tragedy and is also that of contemporary Spanish drama.

It is instructive to notice both what Shakespeare has rejected and what he has retained in developing the love episode of the Revenge plays. In the first place, for the subtly intellectual Hamlet type he has substituted a man of grand and simple nature and bestowed all the subtle intellect on the villain. To get the full effect of the tragedy, moreover, Othello must have no doubt of his emotions. To a Hamlet the world might have been darkened by Desdemona's death, it could not have been ended. On the other hand, Desdemona is something like a maturer Ophelia. She combines a complete guilelessness and frank belief in others' good intentions with a timidity which leads her as it does Ophelia to lie to the man she loves and so give colour to his doubts about her. She is like Ophelia too in her singing of pathetic snatches of old coarse songs.

Falstaff has sometimes been called the "prose Hamlet," and while the epithet casts a flood of light on "Henry IV," it is equally applicable to Iago. He has Hamlet's capacity for analysis and generalization, Hamlet's scorn for those about him. His connexion with the Revenge play is marked at the end. When Iago anticipates Cassio's question :

"Demand me nothing : what you know, you know
From this time forth I never will speak word,"

we are reminded of Hieronimo.

"Macbeth" is in its present state supposed to follow

“ King Lear.” In some earlier form it was probably Shakespeare’s “ first making,” so we infer from a jesting reference in Kempe’s account of his dance from Norwich to London. In that earlier form it was probably much closer to the Revenge type. Before Elizabeth’s death the glorification of the Stewarts is inconceivable, and everything points to Banquo being added at a revision of the play. If this were so, it accounts for the awkward introduction of so important a character as MacDuff when a third of the play is over. In the old play no doubt MacDuff was Macbeth’s partner in the wars and perhaps not guiltless of Duncan’s death. It would be in strict accord with Senecan tradition if MacDuff suspected an intrigue between Macbeth and his wife, and would account for MacDuff’s conduct in leaving wife and children in Macbeth’s power. “ Why in that rawness left you wife and child ? ” Malcolm asks and no one answers him. This is one of the many examples of threads hanging loose in the play—MacDuff’s conduct is dramatically awkward. For the dramatist to call attention to it and then provide no answer is certain proof of a corruption in the text.

But Macbeth’s chief interest in the history of the drama is as an example of Shakespeare’s reaction against the superman hero. When Lady Macbeth taunts him with letting “ I dare not wait upon I would,” he answers : “ I dare do all that may become a man, Who dares do more is none.” The Senecan heroes would have meant that he was a god who dared commit any crime because he willed the end. Macbeth clearly means that he would be below the human level. Besides the various stage situations that link the play with Marston’s “ Antonio’s Revenge ” is one word, which like a tiny floating spar gives evidence of the old play. It is the word “ dudgeon ” which occurs in the famous soliloquy. It comes also in “ The Spanish Tragedy.” “ Macbeth ” finishes Shakespeare’s con-

nexion with the true Revenge play, though, as I said above, "Coriolanus" is an explicit rejection of the conception of human values involved. In his last play, "The Tempest," he looks back again to say:

"The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance."

CHAPTER VI

THE APOCRYPHA AND MUNDAY

MUNDAY is here taken along with the Apocrypha for two reasons. In the first place, his importance, like that of the Apocryphal plays, is due to the light he appears to throw on early Elizabethan drama ; and in the second place he is best treated, like these plays, in a spirit of frank inquiry. Miss Muriel Byrne is at present engaged on a monograph on Munday. She may be able to give a final solution to some of the problems about him. In the meantime no account of Munday is authoritative, and everything said in the text, as elsewhere, should be taken as the hypothesis of a research student thrown out as scaffolding.

Munday was undoubtedly a rogue, and his career has both prejudiced critics against him and cast doubt on his truthfulness. Further, the first modern scholar to see his possible importance was Dr. Collier, whose fall from the position of an almost omniscient Elizabethan authority has been alluded to above. No one doubts that Munday would lie if it seemed to his interest ; no one is quite sure how far Collier would permit himself to go in cooking evidence in points on which he had made up his mind. The latter's methods and morals are well worth examination, but cannot detain us here.

Munday must have had some connexion with the Sherwood Forest district and also with Staffordshire. Our first glimpse of him is his travelling on the continent

in search of evidence against the English Roman Catholics, and passing himself off as the son of a Roman Catholic gentleman of position in Staffordshire. He gave an account of this exploit in his pamphlet "The English Romayne Life," accessible in the printed volumes of the Harleian Miscellany. It is worth reading in order to see for oneself Munday's almost incredible moral obtuseness, and also in order to compare it with his novel "Zelauto." The latter in its first two chapters is a greatly exaggerated and glorified version of Munday's own adventures. The third so-called book seems to be the source of "The Merchant of Venice." On his return from this spying excursion Munday seems to have been given some sort of official position as informer against the unfortunate Roman Catholics. Later we find him official poet to the City of London. He was a prolific publicist, writing translations of romances as well as plays, masques, etc. Jonson, who hated him, represents him saying, "I do use as much stale stuff, though I say it myself, as any man does in that kind." From what follows, as well as from the name Balladino, one assumes that Jonson means to imply that Munday's plays were founded on folk-tales. In fact, too, there is evidence of his obsession by the Robin Hood traditions. In the two historical plays by him which we have, Robin is identified with the Earl of Huntington and there are a good many traces of the folk-play. But Munday is conscious of making a new departure in these particular plays, and he does in fact give the sort of romance that we get in "Ivanhoe." Now, we must remember that the plot of "As You Like It" comes ultimately from the Robin Hood nebula, so to speak. It is usually assumed that it derives directly from Lodge's Pastoral novel "Rosalynde," but Lodge in his turn depends on the Middle English "Tale of Gamelyn." The present writer doubts Shakespeare's debt to Lodge. Robin Hood was

Munday's special subject, and in the "Merchant of Venice" Shakespeare had borrowed from Munday's "Zelauto." It seems possible, then, that both Lodge and Shakespeare may have been indebted to another Robin Hood play by Munday which has not survived. I have elsewhere suggested that the curious little scene in which Jaques makes the foresters crown their fellow who has slain the deer with his horns is best explained as a dramatization of the folk-dance at Abbots Bromley of men wearing horns on their heads. The dress of the persons in that dance connects it clearly with the Robin Hood plays.

Further examination suggests that all Shakespeare's more successful comedies are based on a combination of folk-game and literary source, and this method I suspect was suggested to him by Munday. The title of "Twelfth Night" proclaims its connexion with All Fools' Day, and Sir Toby has obvious qualifications for the Lord of Misrule. "All's Well" looks like a dramatization of the customs of Hock-tide; while most interesting of all is the connexion of the "Midsummer Night's Dream" with the High Summer faast called May Day. Old authorities tell us how the young men and maidens used to spend the night before in the woods: while an old fifteenth century engraving representing the figures in a May dance places the Lady of the May in the centre of the mystical tree and a burly Forester with ass's ears is apparently paying court to her. Now the Lady of the May is identical with Proserpina, and the Fairy Queen is often confused with her (compare for example the Romance of Sir Orpheo), and, if such a combination was a feature of the May dance, it is easy to see the inspiration of the love of Titania for Bottom the Weaver with the ass's head.

The prologue to one of Robert Wilson's moral comedies gives a long list of the various types of plays which he is *not* going to present, ending thus:

“ We do not here present to you the thresher with his flail,
Ne do we here present to you the milkmaid with her pail :
We show not you of country toil as hedger with his bill ;
We do not bring the husbandman to lop and top with skill :
We play not here the gardener’s part, to plant and set and
sow :

You marvel, then, what stuff we have to furnish out our
show.”

Now, if this means anything at all, it is that it was a common practice in the London theatres of that time to have plays which, like children’s mimetic games, represented country occupations. The oldest regular place of entertainment in London appears to have been Paris Garden on the Bankside. This was not, of course, originally a play-house at all, but a place where bear-baiting and similar sports were held. The name dates back to the time of Richard II, and a map of the date of 1560 shows two amphitheatres in it. Paris Garden in fact seems to have been the Elizabethan equivalent of Earl’s Court. Now the population of London then as now was largely recruited from the country districts, and in the country districts the old pagan festivals were still unconsciously celebrated by games and customs that represented primitive religious ceremonies. It would be natural then that the country-bred Londoner should go to Paris Garden at the familiar festivals, and in that open space take part in the mimetic dances which he associated with the day. When writers of “ country morals ” were carried to town in the train of the acting companies, they would naturally provide the usual dramatization of the folk-game of the day. It is noticeable that early plays are short plays, and that Shakespeare complains of the Fools’ habit of improvisation. Early drama was almost certainly part of a variety entertainment which included bull or bear-baiting, the antics of the Fool, dancing and singing and dumb-shows as well as the short play. Of the proximity of the bear-garden we have a proof in one of the

Apocryphal plays. "Mucedorus" appeared in Quarto form first in 1598, and no less than fifteen times before 1668, but it is probable that even in '98 it was an old play. In the early version what was perhaps the first scene opens with the heroine being pursued by a bear across the stage. Her coward lover has left her to her fate, while the hero-prince disguised as a shepherd saves her. That bear is clearly the same as that which pursues and kills Antigonus so unnecessarily in "The Winter's Tale," and some interesting questions are suggested by it. It is unlikely that there was more than one bear provided originally for baiting and yet tame enough to be allowed to run free across the stage. His appearance in "Mucedorus" as well as in "The Winter's Tale" is too slight to make it worth while to provide him for the purpose. Professor Quiller-Couch points out how entirely needless and absurd he is. His ostensible purpose is to get rid of poor Antigonus, but, as the vessel in which Antigonus sails is lost with all its crew, the bear is quite superfluous. This might have put critics on their guard, and a probable explanation is that Antigonus's "exit pursued by bear" is an alternative and very early version of his disappearance, retained in the Folio text because it had shared with the scene in "Mucedorus" an enormous popularity.

But this is not the only link between "Mucedorus" and the Romances, whose date in their present form certainly places them in Shakespeare's last period. Mucedorus himself, a Prince disguised as a Shepherd, reminds us of Prince Florizel, while the juxtaposition of Mucedorus, Amadine the princess, and the wild man of the woods, Bruno, suggests Ferdinand, Miranda, and Caliban. Again, has not Mouse the clown much in common both with the Clown in "The Winter's Tale" and with Autolycus?

Now, we noticed before that the scene in "The Tempest," where Prospero explains to Miranda who she is,

seems to have been modelled on Lyly's "Galathea," and we remember that Sidney complains about 1584 of dramatic plots which remind us strongly of "The Winter's Tale." All these facts taken together suggest that the Romances, doubtless in very inferior forms, belong to the mysterious years 1584 to 1593, and in its turn this hypothesis opens out possible explanations of the more interesting Apocryphal plays.

The First Folio of 1623 is the accepted canon of Shakespeare's plays, though modern editions usually add "Pericles," which did not appear in Folio till the second impression of the third edition printed in 1664. At various times no less than forty-three other plays have been attributed to Shakespeare, of which competent critics now admit the possibility that he had some hand in the following :

"The Two Noble Kinsmen,"
"A Yorkshire Tragedy,"
"Edward III,"
"Arden of Feversham,"
"Sir Thomas More,"

and earlier forms of his acknowledged plays like "The Troublesome Reign of King John," the first part of the "Contention between the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster" and the "Taming of a Shrew."

Of the canon itself critics are disinclined to allow Shakespeare any but a small part in "Titus Andronicus," and his relation to the three parts of "Henry VI" is a question which will probably never be settled. The fact that the editors of the First Folio did include these four plays will naturally for readers who doubt their authenticity cast doubts on Heminge and Condell's competence to be taken as final authority, and that question in its turn is bound up with the whole subject of the goodness of the editing. For this the student must turn to Professor Pollard's "Shakespeare Folios and Quartos," but here some suggestions may be

hazarded to account for the peculiarities of exclusion or inclusion in the canonical Folio.

From the bibliographical point of view "*Troilus and Cressida*" is perhaps the most puzzling problem connected with Shakespeare. The Folio editions divided the book into Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, giving a separate pagination to each section. "*Troilus and Cressida*" comes between the Histories and the Tragedies, but except for one sheet is not paged at all. Further, it does not appear in the Table of Contents. Sir Sidney Lee has shown that it was intended at one time to place "*Troilus and Cressida*" immediately after "*Romeo and Juliet*." The pagination of the Tragedy section is correct until the last page of "*Romeo and Juliet*," when we have page 76 followed immediately by page 79. Now the only paged sheet of "*Troilus and Cressida*" is the second one, and it is numbered 79 and 80. Sidney Lee deduced that at first one sheet bore the end of "*Romeo and Juliet*" and the beginning of "*Troilus*" paged 77 and 78. He was proved correct when a folio was found which included this rejected sheet. Why was this play first placed among the Tragedies, then withdrawn for a time altogether, and finally placed in this curious no-man's-land?

Sir Sidney Lee and Professor Pollard seem to be agreed that the explanation is due to some difficulty with the owners of the copy, and this is possible, but it scarcely explains all the circumstances. For the Quarto issues of "*Troilus and Cressida*" are also most remarkable. There are two of these both printed in 1608-9, but differing only in one sheet. In 1602-3, however, a certain printer called Roberts "entered for his copie . . . to print when he hath gotten sufficient anchorthory for yt, the booke of *Troilus and Cressida* as it is acted by my lord Chamberlens men." He never did print it apparently, but in 1608-9 it was entered again to different printers. On the title-page of the first

issue it is called "The History of Troilus and Cressida as it was acted by the Kings Majesties servants at the Globe." The second issue calls it "The Famous History" and goes on "Excellently expressing the beginning of their loves, with the conceited wooing of Pandarus, Prince of Licia." Not only does this title-page say nothing about its being acted, but there is a new preface which begins "Eternall reader, you have heere a new play, never stal'd with the stage, never clapper-clawd with the palms of the vulgar." The explanation which the present writer wishes to suggest is that there were two plays, one which had been acted and one which had not. Shakespeare's company had told Roberts to enter the *acted* play in order to ban its printing by some one else, as Professor Pollard has argued was done in other cases. Then Shakespeare himself gave the unacted play to Bonian and Walley to print, and they jumped to the conclusion that it was the other and printed it with the first advertisement. Shakespeare himself, no doubt, enlightened them, and they hurriedly got out the second issue with the new preface. Now Heminge and Condell distinctly state in their preface that they intend to give all Shakespeare's *acted* works, and they do not include the poems or sonnets. They thought when they began printing "Troilus" that it was the acted play they had, just as Bonian and Walley had thought when they printed the first issue of the Quarto. Then they read on and discovered that this was not the play they knew. They withdrew it and searched for the acting play, but in vain, and up to the last moment they thought of omitting a "Troilus" play. But they wished their edition to be the final one, and I think every one knew that Shakespeare had produced a "Troilus and Cressida"; so that without a "Troilus" the First Folio would be manifestly incomplete. So at the last moment, in default of the other, our play was included.

Have we any clues to what the lost play was like ? It was fairly certainly a Tragedy. There are two pieces of evidence for this : (1) the original place assigned it by the editors after " Romeo and Juliet " ; (2) the heading of the paged sheet printed when the editors had not yet discovered their mistake. The running title is " The Tragedie of Troylus and Cressida." The rest is headed simply " Troylus and Cressida." But there is a possible reference which may throw light not only on this play, but on the more interesting of the Apocryphal plays. An anonymous satirical play called " Histrionastix " was printed in 1610. In it a " cry of Players " with their poet Posthaste come in to perform in a gentleman's house. Their play is an inconsequent sequence of fragments, the first of which is on the Troilus and Cressida theme ; while the chief part of the rest is from " The Prodigal Child," a play attributed to Shakespeare, but certainly not by him. Troilus and Cressida are parting and he asks her for her favour for " her knight," i.e. for himself, " That when he shakes his furious spear " the foe may fall before it. This looks like a pun on the poet's name, and certain other points seem to agree with the identification. Now, apart from the corroboration that this affords of a romantic play on this subject connected with Shakespeare's name, it suggests further that to early contemporaries he was associated with a type of play which we know existed, but of which we have not many specimens—namely, a series of short plays bound together by some idea such as the illustration of the Seven Deadly Sins. To a group of plays of this sort the apocryphal " Yorkshire Tragedy " undoubtedly belongs, and it would explain some difficulties about " Pericles " if that play had been developed out of an early sequence of the sort.

There is in existence what is called the plotte of the second part of such a sequence on " The Seven Deadly Sins." A plotte was a sort of plan of the play which

was hung up near the prompter's station to remind him when to call the actors. The play itself is not extant. It seems to have taken the form of a vision appearing to Henry VI, the meaning of which is expounded to him by the poet Lydgate. Henry and Lydgate are on the stage all through, just as Andreas and Revenge are in "The Spanish Tragedy." The sin of Envy is illustrated by a shortened form of "Gorboduc."

Now, examination of "Pericles" shows that it too might well have formed part of such a sequence. The revolting first act would illustrate incest, while the conduct of Dionyza is an example of envy. Such an explanation would make it quite natural for dramatists to combine. Shakespeare would not be responsible for the first play. This is explained by Gower, who acts as Presenter of the play much as Lydgate appears to have done in the other. The style of the Shakespearean parts of "Pericles" precludes the possibility of its being early work as it stands, but the present writer suspects that all the Romances—"Pericles," "Cymbeline," "Winter's Tale," and "Tempest"—were written originally by Shakespeare at the very beginning of his career, and that they were for the most part one or two act pieces forming part of a series. To this period, too, would belong the romantic tragedy on the subject of "Troilus" and the early "Two Noble Kinsmen." It will be noticed that, while Lydgate and Gower are associated with "The Seven Deadly Sins" and "Pericles" as "presenters," Chaucer is the source of the "Troilus Tale" and of the "Two Noble Kinsmen." Elizabethans always grouped the three poets, and it would be natural that plays associated with them should be of the same type.

There is another indication of a first treatment of the "Kinsmen" in its subject. Shakespeare's sonnets would have been enough by themselves to prove his preoccupation—at the least as an artistic subject—with

the subject of friendship between young men and its trial by rivalry in love, and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" re-enforces the evidence. "The Knight's Tale" was the classical treatment of the theme, and if Shakespeare wished to give an emblematical play after the manner of "Gorboduc" for Envy, his meaning would be easily taken by the audience. It is noticeable that our play emphasizes very beautifully the strength of the feeling between the young men. It is the centre of the play and forms its unifying idea. The other emotions introduced—the grief of the widowed Queens, the mature passion of Theseus and Hippolyta, the tried relation of Theseus and Pirithous, Emilia's childish friendship with Flavina, as well as her feeling for her suitors—are all kept from being mere irrelevant episodes by the underlying intention of making all such things worthless beside the love of the young men. The pattern, so to speak, is subtly indicated when Emilia is made to compare her own friendship with that of Theseus, thus rousing in Hippolyta the fear that Pirithous rather than herself may "possess the high throne" in her husband's heart.

The suggestion then is that in the years 1584 to 1593, when we lose sight of Shakespeare, he was actively engaged in dramatic work. On the one hand, possibly in some sort of collaboration with Munday, he was dramatizing festival games; on the other hand, he was also taking part in the production of short plays in series illustrating themes like The Seven Deadly Sins and the Lord's Prayer. In such productions there was a tendency to use classical tales, and this would point to their being intended rather for Court and noble circles, though this is even more matter of conjecture than the rest. Such plays lost their popularity somewhere about 1590, and Shakespeare cast about everywhere for newer methods. Eventually in comedy he combined the old folk games with a literary source, and found that so

modified they appealed to the "sixpenny" as well as to the "Groundling." In tragedy he followed Kyd's lead, but was soon convinced that the ordinary human emotions rather than those of the monstrous superman were the proper subject of art. In the last years he went back to his early plays and re-wrote some entirely, some in part, expanding and dovetailing till his parts of a sequence formed a long play.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONTEMPORARIES

I. BEN JONSON

BEN JONSON is generally placed by mature professional critics immediately after Shakespeare, but the amateur, and in particular the youthful amateur, finds him as a rule more difficult to appreciate than any other dramatist of his time. In his own day he won for a time at least remarkable favour, so that Chapman hints that Comedy not satirical or humorous in character had a poor reception. His contemporaries, and especially his younger contemporaries, seem to have regarded him much as his namesake Samuel Johnson was regarded in his later days. The amazing claims which he makes for himself in "The Poetaster" are not really questioned in the reply, "Satiromastix," though he is warned to be more courteous in his self-assertion.

The work itself presents curious contradictions. His tragedies and comedies are very prosaic, except for a certain dignity at times, but the Masques and the unfinished Pastoral, "The Sad Shepherd," reveal a vein of pure poetry. Apart from the Masques, "Volpone" in the intensity of its satire gives the greatest impression of creative power.

The earliest play of Jonson's which has survived is believed to be "Every Man in his Humour." He had been before this one of the dramatists who wrote for Henslowe, but a duel in which he killed his man had got

him into trouble and Henslowe seems to have thrown him off. According to tradition, Shakespeare secured the acceptance by his own company of "Every Man," which was acted by them in 1598. It exists in two versions: the earlier lays the scene in a conventional Italy and gives the characters Italian or Latin names: the later cuts out any little element of romance and anglicizes scene and persons. Jonson prided himself on his "plotting," and this earliest play, together with the greater "Alchemist," afford the best illustration of his meaning. But a short explanation of his view of comedy is needed as a preliminary.

The main tradition of English comedy embodied in Shakespeare aims at producing an atmosphere of happiness and harmony. We are so accustomed to this that we are apt to forget how different is the comedy of most other great literatures. The best example of this other type is the comedy of Molière. In his plays the persons are made caricatures of some vice or folly, and the circumstances of the plot exaggerate and so exhibit the absurdity of the vice. An obvious example is "L'Avare." Bergson's book on "Laughter" explains the philosophy of this view of comedy. The sense of the ludicrous, he believes, is developed only at a comparatively late stage of social evolution, and Bergson holds that laughter is a social gesture developed to correct tendencies dangerous to the progress of the race. In a primitive state the struggle for existence impels the upward movement, but once the necessities of life are secured there is a danger that progress will cease. Above all, social development would be likely to remain at the stage of bare toleration of the existence side by side of a number of human beings. But, according to Bergson, the evolving universe desires more than toleration, desires, in fact, a highly developed social organism in which each individual shall have his part and be related to every other. Now, for such an ideal it

is essential that the individuals shall be quick in perception and adaptation and shall on no account become automatic. To prevent it the social gesture of laughter has come into being, and a human being is ludicrous when he is like an automaton.

That there is some truth in this there can be no doubt. Suppose two people are walking up and down in a yard, each on his own beat deep in thought or reading as he walks. If a mischievous boy were to remove a landmark by which one of these persons was regulating his beat and so contrived that they knocked into each other, the result would certainly strike an onlooker as funny. Again, suppose a man is in the habit of sitting in a chair placed at a particular spot at a particular time every day, and one day, coming in and not seeing that it has been moved, he tries to sit down and falls, nine out of every ten people would shout with laughter. It does seem that the cause of the laughter in both cases was the automatism of human beings.

Now, this definition fits admirably into Jonson's practice in Comedy. In "*Every Man in his Humour*" he gives us a number of persons each with his own trick of thought and speech, which has become more or less completely the whole man. The "plotting" consists in providing an adequate reason for bringing all these persons together on such an account as will exhibit them best, and allow them as it were to come to the ground with a crash. From this point of view "*The Alchemist*" is a better plot than "*Every Man*," because the purpose which draws the characters together is one which brings out naturally the master passion or impulse. Lovewit has left town on account of the plague, and in his absence his servant Face has joined Subtle and Dol Common, and the three together "draw much company" to the house. Their main bait is the philosopher's stone which Subtle, in the character of an alchemist, is supposed to be concealing. We are introduced

to all their customers, each of whom believes that Subtle can procure him whatever he wills, and so their self-revelation is natural and complete. It is easy, too, with such a plot to bring in victims of any class, and Jonson avails himself of his opportunity. In the end Lovewit returns and the clever rogues and greedy victims are alike exposed.

“Volpone” is on almost the same lines. The hero villain pretends to be at the point of death and about to make a will disposing of great wealth. In the hope of being made his heir one person after another comes to see him, bringing him gifts, and with the help of his servant Mosca he keeps them all on his hook. The depth to which the would-be heirs descend in order to propitiate him make the play so powerful a satire that it almost becomes a tragedy. There is little interaction of character. Rather each person is called out by Volpone, as it were, and crosses the stage exhibiting the meanest secrets of his soul.

“Every Man in his Humour,” “Every Man out of his Humour,” “The Alchemist,” and “Volpone” all are examples of Jonson’s Comedy of Humours. In the prologue to “The Alchemist” he identifies Humours with Manners, but in “Every Man out of his Humour” he insists on a more elaborate explanation connecting the term with its medical origin. He wishes to emphasize that a mere trick of dress or manner is not a “humour” and so the proper subject of comedy, but

“when some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits and his powers
In their confluxions, all to run one way
This may be truly said to be a humour.”

Jonson aimed at correcting the follies of his time, and it was natural, therefore, that there should have been a tendency in his plays to satirize individuals. It is

sometimes quite frank. For example, in "The Case is Altered," Antonio Balladino is a caricature of Antony Munday, and the whole point would be lost if he were not recognized. It is extremely probable that there were a great many of these portraits which have not been identified and that they added a spice to the plays. Bernard Shaw is perhaps the present-day parallel. American scholars have spent a considerable amount of time, labour, and ingenuity in trying to discover Ben's living models, and there is no doubt that if we could reach anything like certainty much light would be thrown on important questions. Unfortunately we can scarcely ever be quite sure, and the search itself is not a literary quest, so that the time spent on it brings no return in literary skill. Moreover, the most valuable clues are apt to be found in the least good plays, e.g. "The Case is Altered." To this rule "The Poetaster" is perhaps the only exception, and it forms, as we suppose, the central document of what is known as the "War of the Theatres."

It will be remembered that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern tell Hamlet that the players are on tour by reason of the "late innovation," and then, on Hamlet's further questioning, that the prosperity of this company of adult actors has waned because of the popularity of an "aery of children" and that "for a while" no play would sell in which the question was not discussed. Now, Professor Boas has shown that "innovation" here, as in "Othello," means insurrection or riot. So it is possible that there is intended to be no connexion between the travelling of the players and the controversy about the value of child actors. Taken, however, with what follows, it seems probable that the riot had been due to the result of the controversy.

It is difficult for a modern playgoer to understand how feeling could run so high on such a subject, and it is

worth considering if we can find an explanation. In the first place, the theatre was to the Elizabethans something like the modern football match or boxing contest. But the indignation of the adult players was probably more directly commercial. Though nominally the "servants" of royal or of noble persons, the adult acting companies were really limited trading companies, who paid their own expenses and took their own profits. A man like Henslowe might lend them money and even later own a theatre, while Shakespeare's company under James seems to have had a right to regular perquisites in the Royal household ; but Henslowe was in partnership with a famous actor with whom he was connected by marriage, and, even under James, Shakespeare's company evidently acted constantly at their own public theatre.

The child actors, on the other hand, were in origin choir boys, and their attachment to a royal or noble household was a reality and not a legal fiction as in the other case. They certainly were not "sharers" in the profits. Who took these is not clear—Hamlet seems in doubt : "Who maintains them? How are they escoted." There may, therefore, have been something like a Trade Union dispute behind the "War of the Theatres," but it is more likely that it was a half-serious controversy, kept up by both sides because the public had taken an interest in it. The hero of "The Poetaster," Horace, is Jonson himself. One hopes that Virgil is Shakespeare, but he *may* be Chapman. Cæsar demands the opinion of Horace and the other critics of this "Rome's Honour." Tibullus answers :

"That which he hath writ
Is with such judgment labour'd and distilled
Through all the needful uses of our lives
That could a man remember but his lines
He should not touch at any serious point
But he might breathe his spirit out of him."

While Horace adds that his poesy is :

" so ramm'd with life
That it shall gather strength of life, with being,
And live hereafter more admired than now."

It is possible that Ovid is Marston. His father was anxious that he should be a lawyer, but Marston secretly, it is thought, spent his time in writing. It is worth noting that the contemporary jibe at Jonson was apparently that he wrote very slowly. The other accusation levelled at him in the play has received of late additional confirmation. Demetrius' satire runs :

" I could tell you he were a translator.
I knew the authors from whence he has stole
And could trace him too, but that I understand
them not full and whole."

To this Horace makes no direct answer, and did not presumably think it any matter of shame. In his Roman plays, in fact, every little point is with minute scholarship drawn from classical sources and carefully indicated. On these plays, "Sejanus" and "Catilinei," Jonson himself would no doubt be willing to rest his fame, and historians find them of great interest. Jonson's purpose is quite different from Shakespeare's in his Roman plays. He sets himself an historical and political problem to solve, and it is essential to his purpose that Romans should have felt and thought as he represents them. To Shakespeare this was unimportant ; he was representing human beings independent of race or period. For this reason the domestic side of his persons is always clearly indicated, while Jonson's Romans live entirely for their public careers. This probably is due to Jonson's own temperament and way of life. He lived for some years apart from his wife in a patron's house, though there is nothing at all to suggest that he had any disagreement with her. The small number of women in his extant plays may have been due to an increasing

consciousness of the inadequacy of boys' acting of women's parts: it is more likely that to Jonson home life was unimportant. But just as in the Roman plays Jonson paints with minute scholarship an accurate Roman background, so in his comedies, the scene of which is laid in contemporary London, we get a very vivid picture of the coarser life of his own time. "Bartholomew Fair" must have been one of Dickens's sources of inspiration. Littlewit and his wife suggest the Kenwigses, while Zeal-of-the-land-Busy with his relation to Mr. Littlewit's mother-in-law is a very obvious prototype of Mr. Stiggins. The whole atmosphere of the Fair is like the grosser side of Dickens's work.

Gross Jonson is and the manners of his time do not explain it altogether. It is more likely that that feeling for purely sensuous beauty which he displays in the descriptions of his Masque-settings revenged its suppression in the intellectual atmosphere of the comedies in this way.

The scope of this book does not permit of an adequate treatment of the Masque, but students should read at least two or three of Jonson's, examining carefully the stage descriptions and directions. "The Masque of Queens" is perhaps the most illuminating. In the Preface Jonson explains the purpose of the anti-masque to "have the place of a foil." It is difficult to be sure whether his implication that this "foil" was a suggestion of the Queen is merely a courtly compliment, and the point is of some importance. Looked at theoretically, the Masque appears to be a struggle of the forces of light and darkness, of good and evil, of summer and winter, in which the wholesome powers, the Masquers, are in the end victorious over the evil—the anti-Masquers. If the anti-masque was an invention of Jonson or his patroness to give "variety," this profound connexion with the primæval nature rites vanishes. In

“ *The Masque of Queens* ” the anti-masque consists of Hags or Witches vaguely reminiscent of those in “ *Macbeth*.” They represent the vices. Their songs and incantations have a wild imagination for which Jonson’s other plays have certainly not prepared us :

“ The owl is abroad, the bat, and the toad,
And so is the cat-a-mountain;
The ant and the mole sit both in a hole,
And frog peeps out o’ the fountain ;
The dogs they do bay, and the timbrels play,
The spindle is now a-turning ;
The moon it is red, and the stars are fled,
But all the sky is a-burning.”

Finally they fall “ into a magical dance,” in the midst of which “ on the sudden was heard a sound of loud music, as if many instruments had made one blast ; with which not only the Hags themselves but the Hell into which they ran, quite vanished . . . but in the place of it appeared a glorious and magnificent building, figuring the House of Fame, in the top of which were discovered the twelve Masquers, sitting upon a throne triumphal, erected in form of a pyramid, and circled with all store of light. From whom a person by this time descended, in the person of Perseus, and expressing heroic and masculine Virtue, began to speak.”

“ *The Masque of Queens*,” with its magnificent dresses, which Jonson describes at full length, its Hell, the three chariots drawn by strange monsters, the magnificent House of Fame, cost enormous sums, but perhaps “ *The Masque of Blackness* ” was more beautiful. A mimic sea was somehow contrived, and on it floated a great concave shell, like mother-of-pearl with lights in all the flutings. In this sat the Masquers dressed in azure and silver and with ropes of pearls.

“ *The Masque of Blackness* ” was performed on Twelfth Night, 1606, and it is easy to understand why a Court accustomed to such elaborate staging no longer

was satisfied with the simple poetry of "As You Like It," and why, therefore, the later Romances have all some Masque on show. It says a good deal for the taste of the Stuart dynasty that, beside this rococo comedy, they could still appreciate such tragedy as "Othello" or "Lear."

II. CHAPMAN

Chapman (1559 c.-1634) is a dramatist who has been inadequately studied and who requires to be read slowly to be appreciated. His work is many-sided and the various facets are startlingly unlike. One might expect the translator of Homer to be devoted to classical themes and classical forms: in fact, more than any writer of the time he expresses himself in plots drawn from nearly contemporary history and appears to try to state contemporary problems of conduct. In his tragedies he has long and elaborately poetic speeches, it is true, sometimes rising to real sublimity, but his form nowhere approaches that of Greek drama.

Ward in his "English Dramatic Literature" gives an appreciative and useful sketch of Chapman, which the student would do well to study alongside the plays. Chapman is so original that without some assistance the plays are apt to appear a mere collection of speeches strung together on a thin thread of rather artificial plot. One influence, however, on Chapman's thought and style does not appear to have occurred to Dr. Ward. He notes that "he ransacks his scientific experience like an earlier George Eliot," but does not refer this tendency to its probable origin in the writings of Donne. Two pairs of tragedies stand out pre-eminent among Chapman's plays—"Bussy D'Ambois" and "The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois," and "Byron's Conspiracy" and "The Tragedy of Byron." Both are taken from recent French History. Bussy himself is slain in the first of the plays which bear his name, and

his brother is the avenging hero of the second. This brother is Chapman's version of the Hamlet type, while Bussy and Byron are both on the lines of Marlowe's supermen. A careful study of Chapman's ethical view is needed for the understanding of these plays, and many points need clearing up. For example, Bussy's liaison with the Countess Tamyra is not intended, apparently, to put him in the wrong. It is carefully arranged that Tamyra should first fall in love with him and intrigue to bring him to her, and in this way Bussy appears more innocent. It is noticeable, however, that the spirit of the murdered Friar, who had been the confidant of the guilty lovers, is allowed to return and warn Bussy, and later to return and command the Countess's husband to forgive her. Here and in the comedy "Monsieur d'Olive" Chapman reminds us of the ethical standards in such matters of the Middle Ages. The hero Vandome, returning from a voyage, comes to present his duty to a certain Countess Marcellina, who is his mistress in the sense that Beatrice was Dante's or Laura Petrarch's. He is met by her husband deeply melancholy outside his house, who explains that his wife has taken a vow to turn day into night and night into day, and that at that hour early in the morning she is preparing to go to bed. On inquiry he further learns that she has taken this vow because her grief at Vandome's departure a year before had roused her husband's jealousy. This misconstruction, she believed, could only be thus refuted and avoided for the future. The interest lies in the relations between the three and in the view of others about it. The Earl considers that he has sinned unpardonably against his wife and his friend by his suspicions, and refuses on that account to be embraced.

VANDOME. "Why flies your lordship back?"

VAUMONT. "You should be sure

To know a man your friend ere you embrace him."

VANDOME. " I hope my knowledge cannot be more sure
Than of your lordship's friendship . . . "

VAUMONT " The truth is, I have done your known deserts
More wrong, than with your right should let you
greet me.
And in your absence, which makes worse the
wrong,
And in your honour, which still makes it worse . . .
Hear a strange report and reason why
I did you this repented injury.
You know my wife is by the rights of court-
ship
Your chosen mistress, and she not disposed
(As other ladies are) to entertain
Peculiar terms, with common acts of kindness;
But (knowing in her, more than women's judg-
ment
That she should nothing wrong her husband's
right,
To use a friend only for virtue, chosen
With all the rights of friendship) took such care
After the solemn parting to your travel,
And spoke of you with such exceeding passion,
That I grew jealous, and with rage excepted
Against her kindness, utterly forgetting
I should have weighed so rare a woman's words
As duties of a free and friendly justice . . .
Wherein I injured both your innocencies . . .
I, by false jealousy, have no less than lost,
Murther'd her living, and entomb'd her quick."

To which the lover very sensibly answers :

" Conceit it not so deeply, good my lord,
Your wrong to me or her was no fit ground
To bear so weighty and resolved a vow
From her incensed and abused virtues."

In the end he succeeds in breaking the lady's vow and restoring her to her husband. It is noticeable that all the sensible and sympathetic characters in the play sympathize on the whole with the lady. A cynic Rhoderique says to his friend : " What gave the fire to the Count's jealousy ? " and his friend answers : " What

but his misconstruction of her honourable affection to Vandome." Rh. : " Honourable affection ! first she's an ill housewife of her honour that puts it upon construction. But the presumption was violent against her : no speech but of Vandome, no thought but of his memory, no mirth but in his company, besides the free intercourse of letters, favours and other entertainments." To whom the other : " Why, was she not his mistress ? " and he excuses her freak because of the " miserable condition of her sex : born to live under all construction : if she be courteous, she's thought to be wanton : if she be kind, she's too willing : if coy, too wilful : if she be modest, she's a clown : if she be honest, she's a fool."

Now, the reader is apt to feel that Chapman is dealing with a trivial problem, or that he is anachronistic and is harking back to the social ethics of the reign of Richard II. In truth he is, I think, the link between the ethical and social reconstruction aimed at by Spenser and the *Comedy of Manners* of the eighteenth century. Chapman's aim appears to me to have been to portray a noble society, whose example would be applicable to his contemporaries. His task is that of Sidney and Spenser—still earlier of Castiglione—to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline. It has been pointed out that men of rank about Elizabeth's time were confronted with a certain moral difficulty. The chivalrous ideal was dead : the simple knightly creed was no longer applicable, and the question arose what was to take its place. Christian morality had adapted the knightly qualities so that the two had seemed one.

Now, the superman had regarded woman as merely his instrument and adjunct. The knight had worshipped her as an image of the Virgin, while the rather curious intermediate morality which had been nourished by the Courts of Love had treated her as a goddess with a code

of morality different from a man's and kept secret from him. On the other hand, as Coulton points out, it was held that no one of the knightly class could possibly reach perfection unless he had been apprenticed in the school of secret and hopeless love—love, that is, for a woman married to another man. It seems probable that Sidney's relation to Stella was due to his belief that such an experience was a necessary part of his training. Probably his natural purity rebelled against the insincerity on the one hand or the dishonourable nature of the relation on the other.

“Thou web of will, whose end is never wrought
Desire, desire I have too dearly bought
With price of mangled mind, thy worthless ware
Too long, too long, asleep thou hast me brought
Who shouldst my mind to higher things prepare . . .
In vain thou mad'st me to vain things aspire
In vain thou kindlest all thy smoky fire
For Virtue hath this better lesson taught
Within myself to seek my only hire
Desiring naught but how to kill Desire.”

The love played at, at first as part of the perfect gentleman's equipment “who shouldst my mind to higher things prepare,” had blazed up into a real passion, and then the ugliness of it had become apparent and degrading. He turns from it.

“Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust
And thou my mind aspire to higher things . . .
Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
To that sweet yoke, where lasting freedoms be . . .
Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me.”

The subject of the relation between men and women in its various degrees seems to have interested Spenser deeply—as it was bound to do. I suggest that in the first two books of the “Faerie Queen” Spenser had dealt with what are generally recognized as religious and moral experiences, but with the third he passes to the

social emotions and discusses and distinguishes elaborately between the various types. What he has in mind seems to be made clear by the passage in the Sixth Book where Calidore comes on Colin Clout piping to the Graces (v. 23 and 24, Book VI, Canto X).

Spenser then perhaps suggested to Chapman the ideal of a society in which pure friendship might take the place of the old unreal or immoral love. Note that Vandome seems to disapprove of Petrarch. He pretends to Eurione that she has been slandered as a confidante in mischief "when any lady is in private courtship with this or that gallant your Petrarch helps to entertain time." The lady is to be the inspiration of all heroic deeds, but there is none of the old ugly secrecy. In Shakespeare we find a clear feeling that an harmonious society is the aim and touchstone of virtue, but he seems to have had little patience with the Petrarchan type of love.

Although I have given so much space to the discussion of Chapman's views on this subject, I do not mean to suggest that his chief gift or interest lay in the portrayal of women. It is indeed quite otherwise, but his explicit treatment of this theme is important as showing his master-purpose of "elegant and sententious excitation to virtue and deflection from her contrary." I have said above that Bussy and Byron are both on the lines of Marlowe's heroes. There is, however, an important difference between them. Bussy D'Ambois is apparently wholly noble and falls a victim to what Chapman regards as mean jealousy. Byron, on the other hand, is certainly in the wrong, though not so entirely unworthy as a modern reader is apt to feel him to be. Chapman had probably two models—the Achilles of the *Iliad* and the Earl of Essex, the brilliant but wrong-headed favourite of Elizabeth. The Essex parallel is drawn by Byron himself twice over. Chapman's study of Homer probably suggested to him the

curiously full treatment of Byron's amazed fury and horror at the approach of death. Such an attitude in the soldier hero of a tragedy must have been startlingly unusual. Marlowe's Tamburlaine had indeed defied death, and his Edward II has the degrading terror of the broken man. Byron is more human than the first, not disgusting like the second. Chapman, for all the stateliness of his language, knows how real men feel. The scene in which Byron is pluming himself with having bullied the Court of Justice out of courage to condemn him, and then hears the lamentations of his friends as the Court enters to pronounce his sentence, is interesting reading and would give a great opportunity to an actor. Great psychological insight is shown, too, by Byron's refusal to admit that his ruin might have been averted if he had asked mercy in time. He will have it that his very virtues and services are the real causes of his death. He goes out furiously ordering the guards not to lay hands on him. Those left behind are shaken at the spectacle of his mental ruin. One prays :

“ O real goodness, if thou be a power
And not a word alone, in humane uses
Appear out of this angry conflagration
Where this great captain, thy late temple, burns
And turn his vicious fury to thy flame
From all earth's hopes mere gilded with thy fame :
Let piety enter with her willing cross
. . . ope his breast and arms
To all the storms necessity can breathe.”

In the death scene this note of elevation is struck once or twice by Byron himself :

“ Horror of death, let me alone in peace ;
And leave my soul to me, whom it concerns :
. . . I feel her free
How she doth rouse, and like a falcon stretch
Her silver wings ; as threatening death with death ;
At whom I joyfully will cast her off.”

In the comedy "The Gentleman Usher" the main interest lies in the portrait of a man of Byron's type, who, being wounded by a poisoned arrow, rages first in the usual way, and then by the exhortations of his wife is led to self-command and resignation. In this state he receives supernormal powers, foretells what is going to happen, and is conscious of the real character of the people about him.

" My free submission to the hand of Heaven
 Makes it redeem me from the rage of pain.
 For though I know the malice of my wound
 Shoots still the same distemper through my veins,
 Yet the judicial patience I embrace
 (In which my mind spreads her impassive powers
 Through all my suffering parts) expels their malice;
 And rendering up their whole life to my soul
 Leaves me naught else but soul . . .
 Humility hath raised me to the stars
 In which (as in a sort of crystal globes)
 I sit and see things hid from human sight."

The play was printed by 1606, and bears witness to the belief in the control of the material by the mind which we find in the Folio "Hamlet," in "The Tempest," and in the metaphysical poets. In Chapman the doctrine has hints of the early work of Milton :

" So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity
 That when a soul is found sincerely so
 A thousand liveried angels lackey her
 Driving far off each thing of guilt or fear . . .
 Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
 Begins to cast a beam on the outward shape
 And turns her by degrees to the soul's essence
 Till all be made immortal."

III. DEKKER

Dekker is one of the most interesting figures of his time. He had a very hard life, was imprisoned for debt more than once, and released only to work for

Henslowe at starvation rates. At that time imprisonment for debt meant consorting with criminals of the lowest type, and most men would have degenerated under the experience. But Dekker came through apparently unscathed. His pamphlets do indeed give terrible pictures of the depths to which men could sink, for example, under the impulse of panic inspired by the plague, and his plays show that he was not blind to the fact that great misfortune degrades quite as often as it ennobles, nor to the capacity for evil in the most apparently fine natures. But, on the other hand, he believes still more earnestly that the sinner deserves pity far more than blame, and holds that there is no stage of degradation without its gleam of hope, no situation so desperate that we cannot make of it something fine.

The great fault of his plays is a lack of unity and even incoherence of plot. We are very rarely certain that any of his plays were written without help, and they were all probably written in great haste because of the need of money. Perhaps he has received harder treatment from critics because the lack of connexion between plot and sub-plot was one of the most marked vices of the post-Shakespearean dramatists, and Dekker happens to offer the most absurd instance of it in his "*Satiromastix*." The main plot is laid in the time of William Rufus. Walter Tyrrell, who according to tradition slew Rufus while hunting in the New Forest, is about to be married to a lady Celestine. The King involves Tyrrell in an oath to send her on her marriage night to the palace, and it becomes evident that she cannot escape dishonour if she goes. Lamb gives in his "*Specimens*" the fine scene in which the girl's father in the presence of Tyrrell offers her a cup which he leads her to believe is poisoned. Tyrrell at first refuses to let her drink, but is overborne by Celestine, who falls seemingly dead at once. The whole scene is wonderful.

Tyrrell is still clinging against conviction to the hope that she may go to the palace and return unharmed. The girl herself has no hope of the sort, and if Tyrrell will not break his oath prefers to die rather than take the risk. The old man tries to reconcile Tyrrell :

"O, my sonne,
I am her Father ; every tear I shed
Is threescore ten year old ; I weepe and smile
Two kinde of teares : I weepe that she must dye,
I smile that she must dye a virgin."

With a touch of nature worthy of Shakespeare the young man turns on him.

"Thou Winter of a man, thou walking grave
Whose life is like a dying taper, how
Canst thou define a lover's labouring thoughts ?
What scent hast thou but death ? What taste but earth ?
 . . . I know thy drift
Because thou art travelling to the land of graves,
Thou covet'st company. . . . This element is mine,
This is the air I breathe."

The father answers with a taunt that perhaps he may gain by his wife's dishonour, but

"What man would pledge a King in his owne wife ?"
and Tyrrell responds :

"She dyes . . .
What *slave* would pledge a King in his owne wife ?"

It is impossible to doubt that this fine scene was written as the central one of a tragedy which was to end with Tyrrell's assassination of the King in vengeance. In the play we discover afterwards that the cup contained a sleeping-draught only, and all comes right. The scene is spoiled to a great extent by the anticlimax. What had happened ? Apparently, while engaged on the play, Dekker was asked by his fellow-dramatists to undertake an answer to Ben Jonson's conceited attack

on his contemporaries, "The Poetaster," and Dekker, perhaps for good-will, perhaps for money, agreed. Now Jonson as a delicate means of self-praise had laid his scene in the Rome of Augustus Cæsar and identified himself with Horace and those contemporaries who had annoyed him with the fools satirized by Horace. It may have been part of the bargain that this plot was to be utilized. In any case we have Horace-Jonson and contemporary Rome brought in as a sub-plot to the other play in the time of William Rufus ! Horace even writes an Epithalamium for Tyrrell ! The conjunction is absurd enough, but Dekker was not deficient in feeling by any means, and he saw that the satiric sub-plot was impossible in a tragedy.

But the looseness of Dekker's plots is not often explicable like this, and it is due chiefly to the nature of his genius. Had he been born in any other age Dekker would not have written plays, but novels. He reminds us irresistibly of Dickens, whose youthful experiences were much the same. There is unity in Dekker's better plays, but it is the unity of the novel rather than that of the drama. He tells a story of events and shows us how certain persons behaved when confronted with these events, but the persons rarely bring the events about. Of this almost a symbolic expression is one of his early plays, "Old Fortunatus." He worked on an older play, but certain parts we know are his own. The tale, like that of Faustus, is one of the legends in which a young man at the crisis of his fate is offered by the gods his choice of goods. It appears in the legend of Paris and the apple ; of Solomon in the Bible ; of Hercules in Latin tradition, and in Faustus and Fortunatus in the mediæval world. It is perhaps worth noting that Milton in "Paradise Regained" converts the Gospel narrative of the Temptation into a similar choice. It is interesting that the heroes choose differently : Solomon—wisdom ; Paris—love ; and Old Fortunatus

—wealth. Theoretically, Fortunatus, of course, is blamed. Fortune bids him :

“ Farewell, vain covetous fool, thou wilt repent
That for the love of dross thou hast despised
Wisdom’s divine embrace, she would have borne thee
On the rich wings of immortality.”

But Fortunatus’s satisfaction in his wealth reads far more convincingly. Dekker knew poverty too well to believe the commonplaces on the subject, and he had the true Renaissance thirst for travel and experience. His first idea of using his wealth is :

“ I’ll travel to the Turkish Emperor
And then I’ll revel it with Prester John
Or banquet with great Cham of Tartary.”

He obtains by a trick the Soldan’s magic hat, which transports the wearer whither he will, and this possession seems to appeal more to the author than the never-empty purse itself.

The original play had ended with Old Fortunatus’s death, but Dekker continued it through the lives of his two sons. The tale is confused apparently by the half-conscious struggle in the poet’s mind between the conventional attitude of morality and his own sympathy with life in every form. Ampedo, the elder son, is prudent and conventionally virtuous ; Andelocia, the younger, is a spendthrift with a thirst for experience like his father. In the end Ampedo, who has had no joy in life at all and dies miserably, is placed by the goddess as much in the wrong as his brother :

... “ Those that like him do muffle
Virtue in clouds, and care not how she shine,
I’ll make their glory like to his decline.
He made no use of me but like a miser
Locked up his wealth in rusty bars of sloth.”

In fact, the author appears to agree with Andelocia, “ Away with your purity, brother, y’are an ass. Why

doth this purse spit out gold but to be spent ? Why lives a man in this world, to dwell in the suburbs of it as you do ? ”

Men cannot as a rule control their fortunes, but it is their business to live a full and brave life, whatever befall.

“ Fortune smiles, cry holiday
Dimples in her cheek do dwell.
Fortune frowns, cry welladay
Her love is Heaven, her hate is Hell . . .
Since Heaven and Hell her power obey
When she smiles, cry holiday.”

“ Old Fortunatus ” is more rambling and disconnected than its original form clearly because it has been altered for Court performance and to compliment Elizabeth. The new sub-plot introduced by Dekker deals with the courtiers among whom Andelocia’s bottomless purse carries him, but such personages are not the usual characters of Dekker’s plays. He is one of the early writers of domestic drama. The resemblance to Dickens comes out most markedly perhaps in “ The Shoemakers’ Holiday ” and “ The Witch of Edmonton.”

“ The Shoemakers’ Holiday ” is founded on one of Deloney’s novels. Its chief subject is the upward progress of the Master Shoemaker Simon Eyre, who finally becomes Lord Mayor. Elizabethan feeling about the trading class was a good deal like that of Matthew Arnold. They were supposed to be hopelessly materialistic, the men deficient in self-respect and ready to do anything for money ; the women bent on pleasure and ready to be seduced by any gallant who would look at them. On the other hand, we gather that there were endless plays in which London apprentices were described as rising to impossible wealth and rank.

Dekker sets out to describe the class, the one to which he himself perhaps belonged, as he saw it. They

do enjoy material prosperity, but it is a healthy, natural enjoyment which creates an atmosphere of goodwill and activity. We see Eyre first with his wife and all his men come to try to release the new-married Ralph who has been pressed for foreign service. When he fails he accepts defeat and tries to make the wife Jane take it bravely. There is a pleasant early morning scene, where he rouses his household. He uses strong language, but his admiration for his workmen is unbounded. Of the main plot Jane is the heroine. She supports herself with difficulty in her husband's absence and repels the advances of a wealthy young citizen, Hammon. There is a fine scene in which Hammon courts her in a little seamstress' booth by which she earns her living. It is a scene from which quotation is impossible, for its value lies in its natural and economical expression of feeling. It is written in loosely rhyming couplets, and the skill with which the most natural every-day sentences are woven into the metrical form is one of the many proofs that Dekker "had poetry enough for anything."

Hammon shows her a letter in which her husband's name is given among the slain, and she answers :

" Though he be dead
My love to him shall not be buried.
For God's sake leave me to myself alone."

In the end Ralph returns and they find each other by means of the shoes which Ralph had made for her as a wedding gift. The romantic sub-plot, in which the Lord Mayor's daughter Rose is in love with the noble Lacy who disguises himself as a shoemaker in order to win her, is more ordinary, but gives the romantic flavour to the play.

In "The Witch of Edmonton" Dekker is said to have had the assistance of Ford and of that shadowy dramatic figure Rowley. But the play is so curiously

characteristic of Dekker, on the whole, that one is inclined to give him most of the credit. The Witch, who gives her name to the play, is responsible ultimately for the impulse which leads the hero to the murder that is the climax, but Dekker's usual carelessness appears in the lack of apparent sequence. The Witch herself is one of his most characteristic creations, and no student of the attitude of the age to the subject can afford to neglect her. She is not like the Witches in "Macbeth," a "bubble of the earth," but a lonely old woman, made outcast and almost crazy by the cruel and superstitious fear of her neighbours. We see her first gathering sticks on the land of a farmer who is to other people kindly and affectionate.

"And why on me, why should the envious world
 Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
 'Cause I am poor, deformed and ignorant . . .
 Must I for that be made a common sink
 For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues
 To fall and run into. Some call me witch
 And being ignorant of myself, they go
 About to teach me how to be one."

Old Banks enters and demands :

"What makest thou upon my ground?"

MOTHER SAWYER. "Gather a few rotten sticks to warm me."
 BANKS. "Down with them when I bid thee quickly."

He beats the poor creature, and she curses him. A foolish comic scene intrudes here, but the witch reappears, now ready to do anything to be avenged on her tormentor.

"I'd go out of myself
 And give this fury leave to dwell within
 This ruined cottage (her body) ready to fall with age."

The devil enters in the form of a Black Dog and seals a compact with her, but this part of the scene

is unlike Dekker in every way, and indeed is almost incompatible with the earlier attitude to the witch.

The main story has that multiplicity of natural detail, and that delicacy in the delineation of women characters which characterize Dekker's work. The hero Frank Thorney, a young man of the farmer class, has secretly married a certain Winifred, whom he believes he had seduced. His father, who is in money difficulties, sends for him to marry another girl, Susan, the daughter of a wealthy yeoman. Partly because he dislikes and fears unpleasantness, partly out of a half-selfish kindness to his father, he agrees to marry Susan and so secure her dowry, intending to leave her immediately afterwards. All would have been well had not Susan been passionately in love with him. After the marriage ceremony, he announces that he must go, and Susan insists on convoying him on his way. He urges her return again and again and finally on the ground that it is growing dark and it is not safe for her to be out alone, and she replies, "I expect your father and mine own to meet me back or overtake me with you." Then Frank loses his temper. He feels apparently caught in a net by all these people. The Black Dog enters and rubs his legs, and the idea of murdering the poor girl takes possession of him. He not only does it, but induces the two old men when they arrive to believe that she was murdered by others and that he had tried to defend her. Eventually, however, the murder is traced to him by means of the blood-stained knife, which Susan's sister finds in his pocket. The whole scene suggests Dickens. He is tried and condemned, and in the last scene we see him led to execution. But here again Dekker's complete difference from the other dramatists of his time and the conception of the whole play are displayed. Frank's dying speech is one of quiet resignation. He knows the

weakness of his nature which would have led him into deeper sin had he escaped. He speaks :

" He is not lost
 Who bears his peace within him : had I spun
 My web of life out at full length, and dreamed
 Away my many years in lusts, in surfeits,
 Murders of reputations, gallant sins
 Commended or approved ; then though I had
 Died easily as great and rich men do
 Upon my own bed, not compelled by justice
 . . . my miseries
 Had been as everlasting as remediless
 But now the law hath not arraigned, condemned
 With greater rigour my unhappy fact
 Than I myself have every little sin
 My memory can reckon from my childhood.
 . . . on, on ; 'tis just
 That law should purge the guilt of blood and lust."

" Dekker," Lamb said, " has poetry enough for anything," and perhaps the poetry is nowhere so triumphant as in his " Patient Grizel," founded on Chaucer's story. Because of the poetry Grizel's submission appears wonderfully attractive. The scenes in which the unwilling Furio is compelled by his master to look after Grizel's babies and refuse them to her are intensely characteristic of Dekker in their mingled humour and pathos. The note of the play is the lovely song that Grizel's father sings near the beginning as he weaves his baskets, " art thou poore, yet hast thou golden slumbers : oh sweet content," and that is echoed, as it were, in a chiming close by the short dialogue between Grizel and her wayward husband just before he reveals the happy truth— Grizel pleads with him for the young girl (her own daughter, though she does not know it) whom the Marquis has summoned her to wait on as his second bride :

GRI. " Only I prostrately beseech your grace
 That you consider of her tender years
 Which, as a flower in spring, may soon be nipt
 With the least frost of cold adversity."

MARQ. "Why are not you then nipt ? you still seem fresh
As if adversity's cold, icy hand
Had never laid his fingers on your heart."

GRI. "It never touched my heart : adversity
Dwells still with them that dwells with misery,
But mild content hath eased me of that yoke ;
Patience hath borne the bruise and I the stroke."

Sweet-hearted old men and loving and courageous women abound in Dekker's plays. We find just such another pair in "The Honest Whore." The dramatist's triumphant optimism shines through it. Just as in the "Witch of Edmonton," he takes a man on the way to the gallows and makes us feel that though he is a murderer there is much that is good in him, and that through the death penalty he is winning his soul, so too in this double play he takes a fallen woman and shows her convincingly reclaimed and morally triumphant and at peace. Swinburne's sonnet unlocks the secret of Dekker's genius as no prose criticism can do.

"Out of the depths of doubting life where sin
Laughs piteously that sorrow should not know
Her own ill name, nor woe be counted woe ;
Where hate and craft and lust make drearier din
Than sounds through dreams that grief holds revel in ;
What charm of joy-bells ringing, streams that flow,
Winds that blow healing in each note they blow,
Is this that the outer darkness hears begin ?

Not Shakespeare's very spirit, howe'en more great
Than thine toward man was more compassionate."

CHAPTER VIII THE SUCCESSORS BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

FTER Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher are the first writers to guide the general dramatic tendency. Careful study has been given to the parts of these twin dramatists, but in the meantime I shall treat them as if I were speaking of one author. The important thing to note is their relation to Shakespeare. In some cases they use Shakespeare's themes—themes, not plots ; they seem to have noticed what were the main elements of attraction in Shakespeare's theatre, to have taken them up and to have developed them in their own way. Certain changes in external conditions have to be remembered. Beaumont and Fletcher are writing apparently almost entirely for the Court ; they probably, sometimes at least, had women actresses, and also they probably had rather more in the way of staging than Shakespeare was accustomed to until very late in his career. Let us examine "Philaster," their first joint work, in order to see what relation they bear to their great forerunner.

Philaster is a young and gifted prince living at the court of a usurper who has slain his father. Throughout the play he is supposed to be impelled at intervals by a feeling that it is his duty to dethrone the king. The resemblance to Hamlet is obvious and probably would be exaggerated by the method of presentation, but Philaster is deterred from such vengeance and self-

assertion, not by uncertain psychological motives, but by his love for Princess Arethusa, the usurper's daughter. This change affects the whole nature of the play and is very characteristic of the post-Shakespearean dramatists who have practically only one theme, the relation between men and women.

Again, Philaster is oppressed like Hamlet by a melancholy due, not to his dispossession, or even entirely to his uncertainty about Arethusa, but to his sense of the evil round him. In a fit of disgust he thinks of flying to wild and desert lands, and utters a soliloquy which is perhaps the germ of Rousseau's conception of the "noble savage."

" Oh, that I had been nourished in these woods
With milk of goats and acorns, and not known
The right of crowns nor the dissembling trains
Of women's looks ; but digged myself a cave
Where I, my fire, my cattle, and my bed,
Might have been shut together in one shed ;
And then had taken me some mountain-girl
Beaten with winds, chaste as the hardened rocks
Whereon she dwells, that might have strewed my bed
With leaves and reeds, and with the skins of beasts
Our neighbours, and have borne at her big breasts
My large coarse issue ! This had been a life
Free from vexation."

Besides Philaster there is a girl in the play, Euphrasia, who is disguised as a page under the name of Bellario, and whose relation to Philaster makes her a sort of cross between Ophelia and Julia in "Two Gentlemen of Verona." The treatment of her is very characteristic of the post-Shakespearean dramatists. She is a sentimental figure, and Philaster gives us a pretty sentimental description of his finding the orphan boy, as he believes her to be, in a glade in the forest. The dramatists get a certain amount of value out of the idea that she is an orphan child, and we are startled afterwards to discover that the whole thing is a mistake. Apparently

these pretty pictures were part of the general ornament the audience of the time required. It may be noticed that such a scene as the death of Fidele in "Cymbeline" has the same kind of effect.

"The Maid's Tragedy" is probably the greatest of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays. It is characteristic and yet has a strength not very common in their work. Again, as in "Philaster," we find personages who seem to have been suggested by others in Shakespeare. The nominal hero of the play, Amintor, is represented, rather unconvincingly, as a noble and attractive young man of sensitive and refined conscience. Set over against him we have his friend Melantius, and the pair seem to have been conceived from the opposition of Hamlet and Laertes. Amintor finds himself deeply wronged in his honour by the king. He hesitates to take the vengeance which a noble nature demands because the name of king disarms him. In the sympathetic attitude of the authors to this conventional dilemma we see the influence of the time, partly due to Spanish ideas and partly to King James's insistence on the Divine Right of Kings. On the other hand, Melantius, who is of a coarser fibre, no sooner knows of the wrong than he "sweeps to his revenge." It is possible that the dramatists originally intended this as the chief interest of the play, but in fact the heroine Evadne dominates completely these puppet-like figures. She is the king's mistress, and in the first part of the play glories in it. It has, however, become necessary that she should have a husband, and Amintor, who is of course ignorant of her position, is commanded by the king to leave Aspatia to whom he is betrothed and to marry Evadne. On the marriage night he is told the truth and is plunged in despair, but feels that he can do nothing. His friend Melantius, who is the brother of Evadne, but ignorant also of her relations with the king, returns to court, sees that something is wrong, and when he learns

the truth insists that Evadne shall assist in the vengeance.

The problem of the play is the motive of Evadne's sudden change of heart. A careful examination, however, of the scene between Melantius and Evadne seems to offer a satisfactory solution. Evadne had gloried in her relation to the king simply because he was the king : she had told him that if he ceased to be king he would lose her. To her, to be his mistress was a purer position than to be the wife of another man. Somehow Melantius manages to convey to her his feeling of disgust at her corruption. He says to her :

“ He has undone thine honour, poisoned thy virtue,
And of a lovely rose, left thee a canker.”

In the crowning scene of the murder, these words are echoed by Evadne :

“ Once I was lovely ; not a blowing rose
More chastely sweet, till thou, thou, thou foul canker
(Stir not) didst poison me.”

As soon as she realizes that she is degraded by the connexion, she becomes an avenging Fury because she believes that with the king's blood she can wash away her own stain. She comes to him in his bedchamber, binds him to the bed-post as he sleeps, and stabs him thrice. Her triumph is reminiscent of the great speech of Clytemnestra in the “ Agamemnon.” She gives him three final blows :

“ This for my lord Amintor !
This for my noble brother ! And this stroke
For the most wronged of women ! ”

The king dies and Evadne exclaims :

“ Die all our faults together ! I forgive thee.”

The play does not end there. Evadne, now triumphant

in what she regards as her recovered purity, rushes to Amintor :

“ Noble Amintor, put off thy amaze,
 Let thine eyes loose, and speak. Am I not fair ?
 Looks not Evadne beauteous with these rites now ?
 Were those hours half so lovely in thine eyes
 When our hands met before the holy man ?
 I was too foul inside to look fair then :
 Since I knew ill, I was not fair till now.
 . . . In this consists thy happiness and mine.
 Joy to Amintor ! for the king is dead.”

But Amintor is merely the conventional puppet. It is doubtful whether the dramatists meant the tragedy at this conjuncture. He answers :

“ Why, thou hast raised up mischief to his height,
 And found out one to outname thy other faults . . .
 Joy to Amintor ! Thou hast touched a life,
 The very name of which had power to chain
 Up all my rage and calm my wildest wrongs.”

His repudiation is answered by Evadne by suicide.

“ The Maid’s Tragedy ” has also a sentimental Ophelia-like figure, the forsaken Aspatia. She is ostentatiously heart-broken at Amintor’s desertion and obtrudes herself on his notice singing songs. It is difficult to understand how the dramatists expected us to view Amintor’s treatment of her. Had it not been for Hamlet’s treatment of Ophelia probably no writer would have ventured to have made a sympathetic character behave in such a way.

The beauty of single scenes and speeches in Beaumont and Fletcher’s work is undeniable. It does not, however, spring from the story and from the characters in the inevitable way that the thoughts of Shakespeare’s people blossom into speech.

A very striking example of this fact is the wonderfully beautiful scene between the king and Ordella in that unpleasant play “ Thierry and Theodoret.” The king

has been told that the heir for whom he longs can only be born if the veiled woman whom he meets as he goes from the temple is put to death. The woman is Ordella. Against all verisimilitude the king talks with this, his dearly loved young wife, for quite a long time without recognizing her voice ; but out of the improbable situation the authors snatch wonderful poetry. Ordella is very young and very heroic : to die for her husband is easier than to live with him. Lamb gives the whole scene in his " Specimens." Nearly all that Ordella says is exquisitely touching. The king has said to her :

" Was there e'er woman yet, or may be found,
 That for fair Fame, unspotted memory,
 For virtue's sake, and only for it self sake
 Has, or dare make a story ? "

And she answers with dignity :

" Many dead, sir,
 Living I think as many."

KING. "'Tis terrible."

ORDEL. "'Tis so much the more noble."

KING. "'Tis full of fearful shadows."

ORDEL. " So is sleep, sir,
 Or any thing that's merely ours, and mortal;
 We were begotten gods else ; but those fears
 Feeling but once the fire of nobler thoughts,
 Flie, like the shapes of clouds we form, to nothing."

KING. " Suppose it death."

ORDEL. " I do."

KING. " And endless parting
 With all we can call ours, with all our sweetness,
 With youth, strength, pleasure, people, time, nay
 reason,
 For in the silent grave, no conversation,
 No joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers,
 No careful fathers' counsel, nothing's heard,
 Nor nothing is, but all oblivion,
 Dust and an endless darkness, and dare you woman
 Desire this place ? "

It is after that that the dramatist shows he lacks Shakespeare's fine instinct. Ordella answers that it is better to die young than to wait

"Till age blow out their lights, or rotten humours
Bring them dispersed to the earth."

The real Ordella would not have thought concretely of such things.

Of the plays written by the dramatists alone, Fletcher's "Bonduca" and his "Faithful Shepherdess" may be taken as typical. "Bonduca" is a series of studies of the attitude to the idea of honour of a great number of people. Bonduca is Boadicea, and the scene is laid in Roman Britain. We have various examples of the Roman soldier's thirst for honour, impatience of having another set over him, and despair when his insubordination has led to the shame of himself and his legion. We have the British soldier who will accept no assistance from trickery and is prepared to sacrifice his country rather than give up the glory of fighting against odds. There is also the heroic child. The most interesting figures in the play, however, are the three women, Bonduca and her two daughters. The mother and the elder girl decide on suicide rather than submission to the Romans, the younger is only induced to join them by the memory and fear of outrage. The play should be compared with Shakespeare's Roman plays: it brings out the way in which the Jacobean identified the Romans with this conception of honour and throws some light, therefore, upon the angle from which Shakespeare's plays were written.

"The Faithful Shepherdess," it has been said, is more a masque than an ordinary play, and it clearly gave many hints for the writing of "Comus." It is a Pastoral and has much beautiful lyric poetry. It is spoilt by insistence on the contrary vice of the chastity which is supposed to be its subject.

"The Knight of the Burning Pestle" has been recently acted with conspicuous success. It is chiefly aimed at a kind of play of which no really typical examples seem to have survived. They were apparently accounts of the marvellously successful careers of city boys, uniting the wonders of fairyland with the familiar magnificence of London prosperity. A grocer and his wife came to the theatre to see a play of this sort, and insist that their favourite apprentice Ralph shall be given a part in it. He is finally allowed to improvise a story of knight-errantry which is loosely attached to the original play. In that part all the absurdities of stage conventions are exaggerated. At intervals the grocer or his wife are outraged by the course of events on the stage and interfere. Ben Jonson used this type of induction in a more scholarly but infinitely less amusing manner. One understands Shakespeare's objection to it. The main play becomes as wearisome to us as it does to the grocer's wife, and successful as the whole thing is, it belongs rather clearly to the Decadence.

Although "The Maid's Tragedy" had to be altered before it could be presented in the vicious Court of Charles II, yet Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, both in what they say and in what they leave unsaid, show the influence of a far less wholesome moral atmosphere. Shakespeare may be a little ridiculous, and even once or twice artistically wrong, in marrying off all his young people at the end of a play, but it is certainly more pleasing than the sentimental disparagement of natural human relations, which begins to appear in Beaumont and Fletcher's plays. The middle-aged woman of vicious character was probably suggested, curious as it sounds, by Sidney in the "Arcadia," but Beaumont and Fletcher are responsible for the dramatization of the type, and it became common in their successors.

It is also remarkable that the twin dramatists' audiences seem to have preferred a happy ending. They

have a good many plays of the Romance type, i.e. the entanglement is so serious that a tragic catastrophe looks inevitable, but it is ultimately averted as by a miracle. An example of the sort of thing is the plot of "King and No King." The hero and heroine believe themselves to be brother and sister, and are horrified to find themselves in love with each other. In the end they are discovered to be unrelated. The interest of a play like this is rather of the nature of a modern detective novel, while what emotional analysis there is, is apt to be unpleasant. Shakespeare, of course, used the miraculous *dénouement*, but with him the miraculous is seen to be a necessary part of life, the top of the human ladder, which reaches from earth to heaven; with Beaumont and Fletcher it is a dramatic subterfuge.

CHAPTER IX THE DECADENTS

MASSINGER, MIDDLETON, WEBSTER, AND FORD

THE post-Shakespearean drama might have warned a careful statesman of the approach of civil strife. Much of the Comedy is a commentary on the text of Hamlet's words, "The toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe." There is endless satire of the social aspirations of the wives and daughters of the wealthy citizens and of the needy and generally vicious knights and lesser nobility who are forced by their debts into marriage with them. There is still a tendency, it is true, to represent the worst of these gentlemen as being swindlers impersonating their betters, but glorification of the thrifty middle-class is a curiously common sentiment. This is remarkable because it was in this class that the strength of the Puritan party was supposed to lie and the stage was under the Puritan ban. Massinger's work, however, seems to suggest that the stage was making an effort to redeem its reputation. In his "Roman Actor" the hero Paris makes a long defence of the stage before the Senate, and claims that by making vice ugly and finally punished and virtue attractive the actors "may put in for as large a share of usefulness" as all the sects of the philosophers.

"The City Madam" is a good example of the sort of play. A wealthy citizen, Sir John Frugal (the signifi-

cant names suggest a very probable debt to Ben Jonson), has a foolish wife and two daughters who dress and insist on the household establishment of the noble class. He has also a brother Luke who, having wasted his patrimony, had been redeemed by his brother from a debtors' prison, and is now living in his brother's house treated by his sister-in-law and nieces as an inferior servant. A certain Sir Mortimer Lacy, only son and heir of Lord Lacy, and a wealthy country Squire called Plenty are courting the girls, but refuse the absurd conditions which their vanity attempts to impose. The father then plots with Lord Lacy and pretends to go overseas and enter a monastery at Louvain, leaving all his wealth in the hands of his brother Luke. The latter is again corrupted by the possession of so much wealth, and not only disciplines the women who had ill-treated him into a recognition of their station, but actually plots to put them to death. All, of course, comes right in the end : the girls are married and Luke forgiven on the intercession of his repentant sister-in-law.

The chief appeal of this play, as of the rather more famous "New Way to Pay Old Debts," is the spectacle of oppressed and on the whole innocent people suddenly recovering the whip-hand of their enemies. There is extraordinarily little humour in any of his so-called comedies. The incident in which Frugal is assumed to be a Roman Catholic, while no remark at all is made about it, is curious and interesting. Massinger was certainly a Roman Catholic, possibly a priest. His attitude to celibacy is one of marked approval, and his morality is that of an ascetic, unfortunately not of a pleasant type.

All these dramatists seem to take as their central subject to answer the question, "What is Honour?" The answer with Massinger is apt to be very conventional and narrow. For example, in "The Maid of Honour" Camiola, the heroine, is only "truly honoured" when

she takes the veil. In the "Roman Actor" he seems to intend us to admire the relations between Paris, the actor, and Domitian. Paris has been entirely against his will forced by the Empress into an intrigue with her. The injured husband and the unwilling sinner have an interview in which they agree that the sin cannot be forgiven. The Emperor says :

" O that thy fault had been
 But such as I might pardon ! If thou hadst
 In wantonness like Nero, fired proud Rome,
 Betrayed an army, butchered the whole Senate,
 Committed sacrilege, or any crime
 The justice of our Roman laws calls death
 I had prevented any intercession
 And freely signed thy pardon."

PARIS. " But for this
 Alas ! you cannot, nay, you must not, Sir ;
 Nor let it to posterity be recorded,
 That Cæsar, unrevenged, suffered a wrong
 Which, if a private man should sit down with it
 Cowards would baffle him."

Cæsar resolves on mercy and shows it by killing the offender with his own hand as they act a tragic scene.

" Before life leaves thee, let the honour
 I've done thee in thy death bring comfort to thee.
 If it had been within the power of Cæsar,
 His dignity preserved, he had pardoned thee :
 But cruelty of honour did deny it.
 Yet, to confirm I loved thee, 'twas my study
 To make thy end more glorious, to distinguish
 My Paris from all others : and in that
 Have shown my pity."

Such stuff as this must have been written for a preposterously aristocratic society, and indeed the whole play suggests that the author is conscious of contemporary conditions in England. His general thesis, however, seems to be that men would be noble creatures if it were not for women. It is this that ruins the fundamentally

noble Domitian, while in "The Duke of Milan" Massinger makes of the devotion of the Duke to his wife a degraded and degrading passion.

The most famous of Massinger's plays is the "Virgin-Martyr." It was apparently very popular on the stage, and nothing perhaps is so damning a proof of the deterioration of taste. It dwells with disgusting particularity on the tortures inflicted on the Christians, while the humour consists in the gross badinage of two vicious servants. It is as a whole a curious example of the way in which a literary form returns to its source. The plot consists simply in the opposition of the good personified in Dorothea with the evil personified chiefly in Theophilus. There is a good angel Angelo and a bad Harpax, who disguised in human form attend Dorothea and Theophilus respectively. Antoninus, the lover of Dorothea, is like such characters as "Youth" in the old moralities, played upon by all the various influences and finally redeemed. The resemblance to the "Morals" is increased by Massinger's lack of understanding of human emotion. In this play he is believed to have collaborated with Dekker, but even Dekker's warm humanity has been frozen.

Middleton, Ford, and Webster stand apart from Massinger in the greater liberality of their normal code. Middleton's fame rests chiefly on two plays, "The Fair Quarrel" and "The Changeling." Both are somewhat spoiled by inferior and rather unconnected underplots. "The Fair Quarrel" in particular leaves the impression that the main plot was so slight that the dramatist had to take what padding he could get. The chief character is a gallant young Captain Ager who engages to fight a duel with a certain Colonel who has cast imputations on his mother's reputation. Lady Ager, in a frenzy that the older man will kill her son, tries to prevent the duel by pretending that the accusation is true. Captain Ager is forced by his seconds to go to the

meeting-place, but refuses to fight until the Colonel by calling him a coward affords him a new pretext. He wounds the Colonel dangerously, himself escaping un-hurt, and returning home learns to his joy his mother's innocence. The sub-plot is one of the many turning on a parent's desire to marry his children for money only. There is also a good deal of comic padding turning on the foolish country clown's desire to learn the manners of the "Roaring Boys." The clown is the Father's candidate for his daughter's hand, while his instructor in the vicious ways of the town is a military friend of the Colonel, and the episode suggests the difficulties of the man of good birth left without his only profession of arms. Captain Ager is a living person at once natural and really gallant. His story gives such an impression of English life as Sheridan does in the next century, but his morality is much purer.

In "The Changeling" and in "Women beware Women" there are no such clean minds, but all the same Middleton does give the impression even there of the essential fineness of his own standards. The heroine in "The Changeling," Beatrice-Joanna, is the spoiled and protected daughter of the Governor of a castle. Her father has betrothed her to a certain Piracquo, but when she meets Alsemero she falls violently in love with him and is determined to have him. There is a poor gentleman follower of her father—De Flores by name—a man of unpleasant appearance, whom she has always treated very badly and in whose presence she has never tried to conceal the disgust which he rouses in her. He on his side has a devotion to her evident to all and partly made up of admiration for her beauty and partly of a desire to master her proud spirit. Having decided to get rid of Piracquo, she decides to employ De Flores to make away with him, counting on his cringing desire for any connexion with her to persuade him. He agrees and murders Piracquo. Then he returns to Beatrice. The

scene which follows is one of the greatest outside Shakespeare in all seventeenth century drama. Beatrice, superficial and utterly selfish, greets him with "Thy looks promise cheerfully." De Flores, who knows her through and through, produces a finger he had cut off with the ring on it, and her limited imagination begins to realize what she has done. His contemptuous comment on her purely physical revulsion warns her to try and satisfy him, and she offers first the valuable ring and then more and more money. He answers, "Do you place me in the ranks of verminous fellows, To destroy things for wages?" and then gradually makes her realize what is to be the price. She breaks out incredulously :

" Why, 'tis impossible thou canst be so wicked
Or shelter such a cunning cruelty
To make his death the murderer of my honour !
Thy language is so bold and vicious
I cannot see which way I can forgive it
With any modesty."

DE FLORES. " Pish ! you forget yourself
A woman dipped in blood, and talk of
modesty ! "

The arrogant selfishness and fundamental sensuality of these women of the protected and well-to-do class is the subject also of "Women beware Women." The heroine, Bianca, the cherished daughter of wealthy parents, has made a runaway marriage with a young clerk of inferior birth to her own and in poor circumstances. The young couple are shown as utterly selfish, she leaving her parents in ignorance of the fate of the beloved daughter, while he has not enough money to support both his old mother and his wife in ordinary comfort. The girl's complete lack of any moral principle is drawn with great skill. She is seen looking from a window by the Duke, who is fascinated by her beauty. She is drawn into a meeting with him at the house of a

certain Livia, and her entirely sensuous passion for her husband is quickly cooled by the comparison of his poor circumstances with the splendour of the Duke. The husband, at first inconsolable, is seduced in the same way by the wealth offered by Livia, who has fallen in love with him. The one good character in the play, the Cardinal, brother of the Duke, reproves the latter's sin with Bianca and believes that he has made an impression. The Duke, however, has merely decided to marry Bianca, and with this view he plots to have her husband murdered. The unpleasant underplot seems to be there merely to give the impression of a thoroughly corrupt society.

Middleton has perhaps more originality than any other among Shakespeare's successors. He explores new ground in his plots, and his best situations are entirely his own. It is true that "A Trick to Catch the Old 'Un" has much resemblance to Massinger's "New Way to Pay Old Debts," while his "Witch" has some links with "Macbeth." In view, however, of the obvious independence of the plays noted above, one is inclined to believe that he gave the hint to Massinger, while the whole evidence points to contamination of "Macbeth" by Middleton's play, which is, though greatly inferior, quite good in its own totally different way.

Webster's fame rests also on two plays, "The White Devil" and "The Duchess of Malfi," and his vogue is comparatively modern. He has certain affinities with Middleton, and, though Webster is the greater poet, Middleton is perhaps the greater dramatist. He is impressed like Middleton, especially in the "White Devil," which is the earlier play, with the way in which wealth controls and corrupts the whole community and especially the upper classes. In the "Duchess" there is a marked democratic tendency. In each of his famous plays Webster has a villain who reminds us of

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De Flores—Flamineo and Bosola. Both are of gentle birth compelled by poverty to become the servants of great men. They are both inferior in interest to De Flores, and Flamineo is even more revoltingly wicked and without the same temptation. The heroine Vittoria is his sister, and they are the children of a gentleman who had wasted his means and then died. Flamineo has been put to all sorts of degrading employments to earn his living, while his sister has been married to a moderately well-to-do gentleman of unattractive and limited personality. Vittoria is, like Webster's other heroine, intensely vital and of great beauty. The Duke falls in love with her, and her brother persuades her to meet his advances. Her natural desire for a fuller existence—a desire like that of a flower pushing towards the light—carries her so far, and then she falls in love with the man who has given her life.

In the famous trial-scene this is in effect her plea :

“ Sum up my faults, I pray and you shall find
That beauty and gay clothes, a merry heart
And a good stomach to a feast are all,
All the poor crimes that you can charge me with.”

There are two great scenes in the play, the trial scene and that in which Vittoria tempts her lover to murder her husband and his own wife. She tells him that she dreamt she

“ walked about the mid of night
Into a churchyard, where a goodly yew tree
Spread her large root in ground.”

The Duchess and her husband she sees steal in and dig a grave to bury her alive. Then a whirlwind came “ which let fall a massy arm From that strong plant,” so that both were struck dead

“ In that bare shallow grave that was their due.”

Webster has the seventeenth century gift of getting

wonderful poetry out of the macabre, and, as Symonds points out, his very similes smell of the graveyard, as for example where he speaks of a fowl "coffined" in a baked meat. It is admitted that Webster's separate scenes are fine, but it is sometimes objected that his plays lack unity. "*The Duchess of Malfi*" some critics think should have ended with the death of the Duchess, and even then the motives of the brothers are not laid bare. But a case can certainly be made for the play. The key to it seems to be Webster's attitude to the conception of worth or honour in women. There is a general feeling in his predecessors that love and the natural human relations are unworthy royal personages. Webster seems to me to consider that the truly noble man or woman is the fully developed nature. The Duchess of Malfi marries secretly as her second husband her steward Antonio and has several children by him. When her brothers discover it they are furious and imprison her, doing everything they can think of to weaken and break her spirit. Finally they order Bosola to put her to death, and he announces it to her, but is unable to shake her composure. She is "*Duchess of Malfi still*," but almost her last thoughts are for the homely needs of her children. Webster's source is the story in "*Painter's Palace of Pleasure*," and a comparison of the play with the tale makes his intention clearer. Painter is shocked with the Duchess and regards her marriage as an evidence of degraded mind. Webster alters one significant point. His Duchess is succeeded by her son by Antonio. The friendly Delio's last speech seems to contrast the fate of the Duchess's brothers with her own. They are "*wretched eminent things*" and

"Leave no more fame behind them than should one
Fall in a frost and leave his print in snow."

The Duchess, with her full humanity, has her roots deep

down in life, and her son and Antonio's will carry on her line :

“ Integrity of life is fame's best friend,
Which nobly beyond death shall crown the end.”

In this play Webster uses finely these terrible scenes in mad-houses, which other dramatists seem to introduce merely for the sake of their grotesque horror. It is essential in this play that the Duchess should dwell for a time in a world of madness and death, and the mad-house scenes both fulfil this dramatic necessity and strike the note of the play, even as the storm in “ Lear ” is at once the last factor in the old King's mental ruin and a “ semi-choral antiphony ” answering to the tumult of passion within him and symbolizing it.

FORD

There is a fascination about Ford when one has learned to go past his unpleasant subjects to the essential purity of his thought beneath. He is a Jacobean Shelley, with Shelley's yearning for a world in which the mind and spirit are the only important factors. It is a mistake to suppose that he wished to abolish the “ laws of God and civil use ” in our world. But his drama is founded on the idea that the society of his time was apt to be antagonistic to the higher natures and desires. It is in this way that he points on to Revolution. It is unfortunate for Ford's fame that his theory almost demanded the portrayal of the baser sides of life as an explanation of the divagations of his finer characters like Giovanni and Isabella. In “ 'Tis Pity ” the older people who ought to have counselled the hero and heroine are utterly corrupt, and, though Tecnicus in “ The Broken Heart ” seems to voice the poet's morality, he is so shadowy a dramatic figure as scarcely to count.

Ford has some affinity with Webster's point of view, though his interest is entirely with individual morality. With him perfect sincerity is the test of virtue. Love and marriage are only pure when the outward bond is the reflection of an inner one. In "The Broken Heart" Penthea has been forced by her brother to marry a man she does not love, because it will in some way forward his interests. She had been previously betrothed to Orgilus, whom she loves. When her betrothed, who had been away, returns in disguise and claims her as truly his own, she repudiates him, but the struggle in her mind is such that she eventually goes mad. She considers herself polluted for "that being bride to Orgilus she lives in known adultery with Bassanio." Less interesting is the story of Calantha, whose great scene Lamb praised so absurdly. She is, however, Ford's example of royalty. She is bound to duty and may not let her love interfere in any way, but her broken heart releases her from the necessity of marrying the Prince she does not love.

In "Perkin Warbeck" we have an interesting study rather than a complete play. The hero has so long acted a falsehood that there is no reality left in him. He dies eventually rather than admit his imposture. A subtle skill is shown in his theatrical language, by which the falseness of his claim is indicated :

"noble thoughts
Meet freedom in captivity: the tower
Our childhood's dreadful nursery."

He is like a pinchbeck Richard II.

EPILOGUE

WE have now seen the Elizabethan drama run its course. Shirley affords some scenes of interest, but it is clearly drama kept alive, so to speak, by artificial respiration. As soon as the Puritan party gained control they closed the theatres. That was in 1642. During the interregnum Sir William Davenant, who prided himself on his connexion with Shakespeare, in his efforts to find a drama which would meet Puritan views evolved something like modern opera. He also seems to have invented the modern stage. When after the Restoration the theatres reopened, a subtle change had taken place in taste. Congreve is perhaps the best dramatist to read to appreciate this fact. His one tragedy, "The Mourning Bride," is the Restoration substitute for "Romeo and Juliet"; his "Way of the World" is the substitute for "As You Like It." England has never since produced really great drama.

What were the causes of the decline? It is sometimes implied that the closing of the theatres was in itself sufficient, but in fact the decline is clearly marked before that. It is likely enough that a literary form, like any other growth, carries its seed of mortality within it. But all really great art, and drama surely more than any other, must be nourished by intimate association with the great mass of the people. Early Elizabethan drama was a thing almost extemporized by the people for the people, and essentially among the people. Shakespeare himself might carp at the groundling, but he never forgot his needs and he had certainly

begun as his poet. And then the Stuart dynasty drew to itself this miraculous incarnation of a people's genius, which was Shakespeare, and drama came to be written more and more for a narrow intellectual or aristocratic circle. May-games and Whitsun Pastorals were frowned on by the Puritans, and the suppression of the pure folk-drama, which had been the seedling garden of the literary drama, was a far more serious blow than any closing of the sophisticated theatres. Middleton and Ford and Webster may stress a democratic morality, but they are clearly not addressing country-folk or humble artisans, and it seems to be a law that to appeal to these is the condition of immortality.

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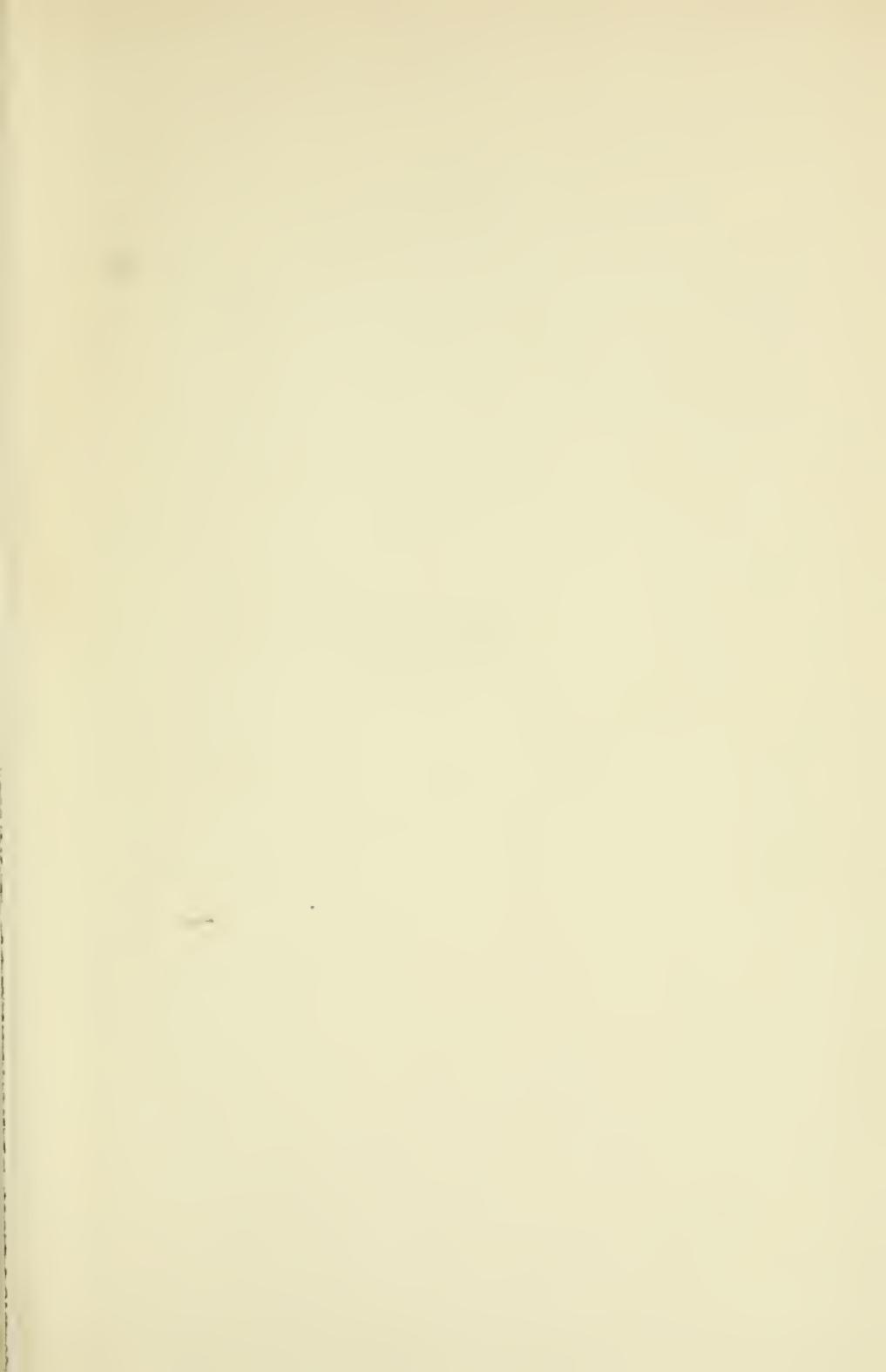
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*Printed in Great Britain by
Butler & Tanner,
Frome and London*





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